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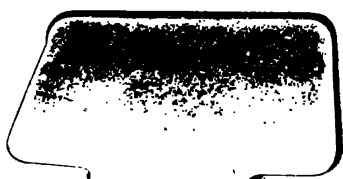
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THE
MINISTRY
OF THE
BIBLE.

CHARLESWORTH.



THE MINISTRY OF THE BIBLE.

The Ministry of the Bible.

BY THE

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LONDON:

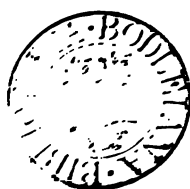
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PREFACE.

THERE are boundaries of the mind beyond which thought *cannot pass*, and there are boundaries beyond which it *must not pass*. There are heights of religion from which thought, looking forward, becomes weak and embarrassed. The upraised eye of the body seems even from the clouds, ever reminded of its shortness of reach. There seems to be ever in the sky, as it were, a hand, waving to the pride of man, and sending down trickling to the roots of his heart a feeling of his own littleness. And there is also a *firmament of the mind*, a veil over its strongest and most elastic thoughts, a curtain that, like that of the inner sanctuary of the ancient temple; it is death to attempt to draw.

There are lessons from the ancient prescriptions of God expansive and variable. They come out from His throne, as the four streams of the river out of Eden, and are as the voice of many waters to the soul. Rightly said the Psalmist of Israel, "Thy commandments are exceeding broad." The rebuke of the sin of Uzzah, and of Korah and his company, in another form, returns again and again to the world, flashing forth warnings to inordinate presumption, bidding the waves of excessive rationalism be still, and pointing amiably to examples of blessed and contented faith, in the lives of the greatest and most gifted of men.

The limitations of human thought are, however, solely the prerogative of God: whilst no man may lawfully alter His revelations, either by unauthorized additions or wilful misinterpretations: there is no such divinity and sanctity of restriction in or around the opinions and thoughts, the words and writings, the commentaries and compilations of a man, or an association of men, want-

ing in such special marks of Divine appointment as the old prophets, evangelists, and apostles.

The Prayer-book, though an unequalled translation of the Bible, not having upon it the same seal, never, either from native internal excellence or strength of antiquity, can claim an equal worship of approach, or righteously keep within very defined lengths of it, either the ministers or laity of the Church of England. There are too many examples in history of the usurpation of God's prerogative in the limitations of human thought. The old threat in reprimand of Paul and Silas, has, in its attack on the freedom and existence of religious thought, been often; under often differing circumstances repeated. There have been men in all times alike in interest and thought, who have used every influence of persuasion and intimidation, to thrust their peculiar opinions and creed upon others.

To pluck from other minds different or opposing thoughts, and to implant kindred ones, has ever

been a characteristic of religious sectarianism, which, in its action, has not always hesitated at the worst of crimes. Even now, when "the liberty of Christ," by the interpretation of past providences, is becoming comparatively well understood, and the spirit of St. Paul's ordination charge, (See ii. chap. 2 Timothy, verse 9) has much reduced ministerial religious oppression and intolerance. There are combinations of men who think it God's service to crush the entertainers of opinion unlike their own.

The Divine Founder of Christianity, knowing that the love of God had, like the torrent of a fountain in dispensation, many separate streams, regarded the disciples outside his own little company, with a more catholic and compassionate spirit. They were doing good in *His name* in a different way, and their *mode* of assailing evil made not less creditable or effective its results. No man, said our Lord, speaking lightly of Me, can cast out devils in My name, *i.e.*, no man preaching My doctrine carelessly, insincerely, faithlessly, can *suc-*

ceed, as these have, with the overthrow of vice, and the substitution of My religion's fruits.

The spirit of religious oppression, is in some instances, less culpable, than in others. Where temporal pains are brought to oppositionists from fallacious convictions that the real meaning of Divine revelation is being perverted; the bringer, is more an object of pity than condemnation, and, in his course, excites from the liberal minded, hopes and prayers rather than anger.

St. Paul, once the worst of religious tyrants, would gladly have put to death all who thought Christianity preferable to Judaism; he seriously believed, until new light flashed on him, that Christianity was an adversary and dishonourer of God. The martyr Stephen prayed, whilst smitten with stones, for the young man then consenting to his death, who, not long after, would have freely died for *his* faith.

These and other records of ill-grounded and mistaken zeal, should make men extremely careful

with what judgment they judge, and with what measure they mete, constituent interpreters of the Bible.

A peculiar education of the mind, the transplanting of thought, is never accomplished successfully and enduringly by physical pressure; the mind often suffereth violence, *but the violent never take it by force.* Thought and opinion are not like a laurel or dahlia sprig, into new soil, to be thrust confidently into the heart; like the wheat, the seed of thought must be gently scattered, and, like the wheat, it remains a season hidden; it has many youthful revolutions in the heart before it breaks out into steady singing, and harshly to interrupt its expression, is neither right, wise, nor effective, it is rather the promotion of hypocrisy, and it certainly chills the affections.

One man may peremptorily command a change in, and indirectly menace, the opinions of another, but neither his order nor his threat will be *really* obeyed. There may be *an appearance of obedience*;

in correct definition, a sign of hypocrisy.—The *signifier thinks as before*, and with feelings hardened by the rudeness of his supposing converter, is less likely than ever to change.

Like the stratifications of the earth to completion, the heavings of the heart to the full and firm acceptation of Divine truth, are slow in process, and to deal uncharitably and oppressively with its successive stages and changes, is to assail the constituency and provisional determinations of God. The love of God and of Christ in the heart, may be left confidently to the fertilities of prayer, worship, and the gracious interminglings of His Spirit, with the digestion of the Sacred Scriptures, to bring up the spiritual babe to the fullness of the measure of the stature of redemption; and to interfere roughly and unseasonably with the often externally misunderstood marchings of these Divine and human combinations, is a trespass on holy ground, and a helping, through ignorant traditions of partizanship, to make the word of God of none

effect. The question of ministerial Christian fellowship is sufficiently and better answered by a mutual grateful acknowledgment of the inspiration of the love of God, and of His Christ, than by refinements and comparisons of sentiments, that can neither, by their holding or rejection, save or condemn.

There are, I have said, boundaries of the mind, beyond which thought must not or cannot safely pass. In the promptings of the first transgression there was something of curiosity and the covetousness of human reason. The sin of Adam and Eve was not entirely a carnal one; there was a proportion of prodigal intellectualism in its motive, and the extravagant rationalist in his variform impugments of "original sin" is in mental action a striking illustration of some of its nature. *The taste of the forbidden fruit* was not the only object of Adam and Eve's desire; the pleasure *during participation* not the only one wished for; imagination looked for, and at last promised, a superior one,

in digestion, "Ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil, and your eyes shall be opened."

By innumerable reproductions, all history, and history must of necessity omit much of human action, points with most weighty confirmations to the Mosaic statistics of "The Fall;" it shows, at least, that Moses did not, for the convenience of his narrative, *invent* a sin, and that, if not specially inspired, (which I do not at an instant doubt), he was a deep reader and a true prophet of human nature. It is not easy to conceive that in writing this explanation of evil, his experience of the besetments of men, sufficiently helped a shrewd guess of *their original type* and its formation; he had witnessed much of the lust of the flesh, but comparatively little of the *pride of reason*, and both these, and the one as much as the other, are the germs of "The Fall." His was not an age of strong reason, he lived when human intelligence was soon satisfied, and amongst a people, whose masses sought not for, or cared for, much more than their daily bread.

With this general stupidity and fleshliness before his eyes, he would not be likely either as an ordinary historian or poet (for historians and poets in circumvention and flight have ever, so to speak, a spring-board beneath their feet, *i.e.*, some fact, or feature of a fact, through which to flash their thoughts upward or onward) to have made *rationalism* a strong constituent of "original sin."

Outward aspect could not have given such a retrospect of the central tree as that depicted in Genesis. It could have helped him to paint it "good for food" and "pleasant to the eyes," but not "desirable to make one wise;" and the inference from this last sentence alone, and there are many of its kind, is to the theologian a pillar of faith, and to the rationalist a seasonable warning.

The fresh breaking out at the present time in larger size of one of these ancient plague-spots of "original sin," shows wonderfully and painfully its first virulence. Its hereditary poison unweakened by long circulation, stimulates the mind of the

learned, and the ancient voice of temptation, in cadence well refined, in allurements well adapted, from a quarter much looked to, speaks to the world with invitation and promise, "Ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." In the chidings of this voice, there must be nothing of heated temper, hastiness, injustice, or personal resentment. Responses thus filled, carry not with them the sympathies of the well-educated, or the attachment of the unlettered. We have to meet gentlemen, and scholars, and we must meet them in a gentlemanly and scholarly manner. I humbly think and hope that from the reaction and inspection of their writings, will issue to the Church of Christ much wholesome readjustment, not certainly of doctrine, not certainly of belief, but of the *reasons* of doctrine, the *reasons* of belief. Religion is now too much of a *feeling*, too much of an *idea*; there is not enough of *thought* in Christian faith, and "we ought to be able to give a reason to every man of the hope within us." The reoccurrence of "a fire" leads

people to think of "insurance," and, I trust, in the future, this reoccurrence in new shape from unexpected places of dangerous revolutionism, will lead religionists to look more examiningly at their feet, and sceptics, with some attention to a Divine revelation they have scoffed at after weak investigations.

E. G. C.

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The Ministry of the Bible.

CHAPTER I.

The Bible to be Read with Understanding—The Compilation of the Bible—True Definition of Apostolical Succession—The Light that Shines on the Sacred Page—How far Controversy is Justifiable—Two Streams from One Rock—The unassisted Soul not a Verifying Faculty—Difficulties of Old Testament Reading and their Solution—The Old Testament a Standing Protest Against Repudiation of Atonement by Blood—Not much Expression of Immortality in the Old Testament.

THE Bible to be read *profitably* must be read *understandingly*: its chapters must not be glided through for the weak reflection of having read so many: its pages must not be searched for the confirmation of sectarian prejudices: its lines must not be wilfully misconstrued into an apology for some darling lust, nor its sentences explored as ammunition stores for controversial war with differing interpreters: the Bible must not be approached to be defiled with the rancours and emulations of party strife, but with humility, hunger, thankfulness: thankfulness that reason and faith working together will ascertain from it the mind of God, satisfy the thirsty heart, and yield to earnest thought a daily bread. At the threshold of some

of its prophetic portions the most powerful understandings have felt unable to proceed; perhaps these prophecies require more years of ripening ere their mystery can be broken, and perhaps only towards the end of their path will their fulfilment be rightly anticipated. In the meantime, there are pastures of the Bible through which the understanding can have long and rich progression, and reap for faith, increasing contentment and patience.

It is of moment that the mind have the clearest views respecting Divine Revelation, and that its Eden scripture groves be entered by right avenues; *reverence for the Bible* must not *weaken the understanding*; faith must have reason for an ally, a subordinate yet cordial ally: the mind reasons up to faith, and then follows closely and meekly behind: it is in this order, was arrived at the compilation of the inspired books of the Bible; the early Fathers by the bearing of their reasoning faculties on the internal and external evidences of inspiration made selection out of numerous manuscripts: on these grounds of examination the Church has always declared and declares the Books of the Old and New Testament to be inspired: she claims not special inspiration for *the compilers* of these Books, but *for the writers*; claims it on the ground of the severest scrutiny of the internal and external evidences of their scripture; it is because the books of the Apocrypha had not these internal and external signs of inspiration that the primitive Fathers divided them. It is well indeed

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all should thus distinctly know of the origin and construction of their blessed chart of temporal and eternal happiness, and both understand what is read therein, and how the reading was provided, and that this may be known the better, evangelists like Philip have by God's grace in all ages met the anxieties of Bible readers when requiring some man to guide them.

This is the accounting for the Christian ministry. This is the proper definition of Apostolical Succession, that since the Apostles of Christ each generation has required studious devotional Godly teachers, who by the concentration of thought on the Bible, were able to assist the understandings of those not so exclusively occupied.

The inspired writer of thirteen epistles of the Bible exhorts every man to have a ready reason to give of the hope in him: how can this be without a clear understanding of the Bible? *i.e.*, an ascertainment by his understanding of its meaning; an ascertainment by honest application of intelligence to its texts of their real conveyance; and in this pursuit there is an influence helpful and attractive, shining through the prayerful mind on the hallowed page. The Holy Ghost as the bow in the cloud spans the inquiring soul, and these leaves that are for the healing of the nations bud and bloom in its rays. This is the light that lighteneth every man who cometh humbly and sincerely to the Bible. That takes of the things of Christ and sheweth them. That brings to remembrance his

forthtellings, and will be the true Christian's companion to the end of the world.

Let not the Pilgrim of heaven with such shield and sword, in the challenge of circumstance talk pitiaibly and ignorantly in the confession of his faith, and by uncertain definitions of his belief, excite the mournfulness of his brethren, and the ridicule of Christ's aliens.

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul exhorts to the avoidance of intellectual strife on subjects of religion, "if any man seem to be contentious we have no such custom." Christianity is not to be made the convenience of vain-glorious loquacity or the whetstone of the uncharitableness of selfish passions: the remarkable saying of its Divine author "think not I am come to send peace on the earth, but a sword," is no apology for sectarian wars and fightings: the spirit of Christ is peace: but He knew what was in man, and He prophesied rightly, that his doctrine would clash with it.

There are great distinctions in the *motives* of controversy, and these either justify or condemn its engagement: an exponent of religion followeth not Christ by self-associate laudations and odious comparisons: the spirit of the Pharisee has received an everlasting rebuke; and only when seemingly incorrect meanings of his Master's words are abroad will the Christian raise his voice of challenge and refutation, nor will this be done without much caution and charity, in remembrance of the great precept of mutual

action, "whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so unto them." We are not to pursue the holders of new opinions as *wilful* spoilers of the truth, and with the passionate attribution of dishonourable motives. We are to regard differing minds respectfully as to their intent, and with a strong sense of our own fallibility.

The interpretation of sacred scripture has never met with complete unanimity : the commentaries of the ancient scribes were disagreeing, and Jesus was scarcely out of sight, ere his testament, like too many of only temporary reference, was made an instrument of schism and a source of contention : the confirmations of the first Apostles of Christianity were, we know, frequently disturbed by prejudiced understandings, and it is probable the consequent pretensions of the Bishops of Rome, received first and increasing permission more *from popular desire for some applicant means* of concord, than *from really believing approbation of the means*.

The eye of the world has now long been open to the selfish corruptions of this assumed primacy and infallibility, and the striking question of Pilate, often repeated, and often answered, is with louder echoes yet renewed, "What is Truth ?"

Where and to whom are we to look for an answer : the Prayer Book gives much, but not entire satisfaction : its meaning is not always well expressed, and is out of reach

of many anxious inquirers. There is however happily, a growing disposition of gratitude for what it has accomplished, and there remains over and above its good offices, the privileges and accomplishments of private prayer and meditation: the missionary promise of a Comforter is in these engagements realized, and requires not powers of imagination or a sanguineness of temperament for its recognition.

We are prone in the brightness and freshness of the New Testament's revelations to be attracted from the lustre of the old: even as the glory of the setting sun is forgotten in his morning splendour, so is the radiance of ancient inspiration lost sight of in the arising of a new dispensation. Yet the Old and New Testament are not two pictures; the one is the back-ground of the other, and necessary for its distinction and illustration. The Lord Jesus the central figure of the latter, is ever seen pointing to the former. "Think not (said He) I am come to destroy the law and the Prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." The great features of Christianity are all discernible in the early revelation, and on the first fugitives of Eden, its countenance with smile of hope is seen to fall. "Had ye (saith Christ) believed Moses ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of me." The inspired legislator, the poet, and the seer, all pourtrayed that which the Evangelist, the Apostle, and the Divine related. God as a Father, Man as a Sinner, Jesus as a

Saviour, Immortality as a consequence, are truths deep and firm, and shining in, and applicable from, the bosom of both Old and New Testament. Since the lapse from their first estate the children of Adam and Eve have all partaken of the same restorative. Moses and Abraham and all the Prophets touched the hem of Christ's garment, and there came out virtue for willing men: they saw and walked with, and wrote of, the Emmanuel of whom St. Luke and St. Paul and St. John were eye-witnesses, and in the birth of His only-begotten Son into the world, God said not, I give you fresh light and fresh sustenance, but I give you stronger beams of the same light, stronger powers from the same sustenance: hitherto ye have not been able to bear strong meat: come ye now nearer to the waters: eat ye now more plentifully and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

The Bible is the safest reference in all those far-reaching questions which inquisitive thought is ever putting to religion. The spirit of man is ever peeping forth upon the past and the future. There are many foot-prints on the sands of time that it seeks to measure, and there are from the forward horizon, glowings deep and rich which it ever longs to penetrate. It feels instinctively a connection with antiquity and futurity. It is conscious of some inherent stain and of a destiny beyond the grave. It perceives around it depravities distinct from those of habit, depravities of ancestral

derivation, and it perceives by some remnant lights of first estate, its own life eternal and the undeserved enduring love of God.

It is therefore somewhat prepared to receive the strong intimations of sacred scripture respecting the First and Second Adam. It is somewhat predisposed to find in Divine revelation the account of a fall. It is somewhat pre-inclined to find there, assurance of immortality and a Redeemer, and when the early, middle, and later voice of inspiration depicts man morally and spiritually degenerate, depicts him to be through the grace of God the subject of redemption; when Moses brings figuratively to light his first act of degeneration, when David, in the li. Psalm and 5th verse, indirectly alludes to that act, and when St. Paul, in commentary, says that on account of it a judgment came upon all, when in every path of the Bible there are greater or less signs of rescue from its consequences through a Redeemer. It is not in these confirmations startled as though some strange thing had happened; its innate and developed consciousness of deflection, of immortality, and of its heavenly Father's unwearied mercy has (though slowly and dimly) led it to anticipate. It is not hereby meant to erect conscience, or the soul, which is another name for conscience, into a judge of what Divine revelation should contain: it is only intended to show that from self-knowledge and circumstances, and from some remains of

filial likeness, the soul is not by the Bible's chief points, namely, the fall and the redemption, taken by surprise.

The religious statistics of the heathen furnish an illustration of these spiritual instincts. They have a prevailing notion that the Great Spirit for some long-remembered offence is partially at variance with His creatures, and that sacrifices of blood are necessary. The heathen mariners with whom Jonah voyaged, attributed the storm to the anger of the Deity, and demanded a *sacrifice*.

The sacred historian records that God created man in His own image (he referred of course to a mental similitude). The soul of man in its first-born brilliance clearly reflected its Creator, and had it remained undarkened, would not have needed a further Divine revelation; it would have required no external assistance to know the will and mind of God; it would have been "a third heaven" of itself; it would have had unfailingly outbreking from itself "the still small voice"—"This is the way, walk ye in it." It would then in higher and fuller sense have been "the verifying faculty" modern essayists have named it. But the soul of man has not kept its first estate, has not retained its Eden. It has sown to the flesh, and reaped from the flesh a corruption; it has been an adulterer, and made, like Babylon, "all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;" it has

wilfully abdicated its throne and brought on a warfare which continually drives it into captivity to the law of sin, a warfare which the IXth Article of the Church of England describes as "a contrary lusting of the flesh and spirit," and to which all experience testifies. Thus is her strength impaired, her vision weakened: she can only bear to know in part, to see through a glass darkly; and the edict of Sinai, "Thou can'st not see My face and live," hath descended with memorial rebuke on all the world, pointing the too presumptuous mind to those guardian cherubims of Eden, who, with four-pronged spear and flaming countenance, keep the way of the Tree of Life; and taking in companionship's hand a more modern divine saying, "Except ye receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child ye shall in no wise enter therein."

It is then on account of the fall, that man needs an external revelation, on account of the fall, that the soul has not light enough in herself. That need has been mercifully administered to; that short-sightedness relieved; "God at sundry times and in divers manners hath spoken to the fathers by the prophets, and in these last days by His Son. The Spirit of the Lord God came upon holy men of old and upon His well-beloved Son. We have thus in hallowed association two testaments of God that are as a lamp and guide to the pilgrim's feet amidst the shadows of sin: a shield of doubts and fears,

a guarantee of ultimate deliverance from hereditary evils, and an authoritative witness that the gates of heaven are open to all believers.

The intellect of man however, in its first applications to the Bible will oftentimes retire with the exclamation of an old divinity student, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it." There are narratives in its first portion so marvellous, manners of divine communication so unusual to modern experience, and regulations so strange to modern society, that the thoughts seem to recede from their inspection with a sense of weakness, and the feelings to withdraw with the shadow of incomplete sympathy; even as from its upward glancings to the starry firmament, the eye descends a powerless instrument of the questions of the mind, so seems the intellect, from its early examinations of the Bible to descend: but though the path, &c., of the planets is undiscoverable by the naked eye, it is ascertainable through a telescope, and though parts of the Bible are unprofitable to reason *alone*, they are rendered sustaining and consolatory by faith in the benevolence and omnipotence of God. Where this excellent spirit of faith is, there is liberty; it gives the thoughts eagles' wings, and enlarges and warms the heart.

It is meet that we should receive gratefully, hopefully, and faithfully, the mysteries of godliness, and not like the

ancient revolutionists of the wilderness, give back to heaven reproaches for her manna. The harvester of the Bible should, in binding its sheaves, be careful and diligent, loving and reverential, and he is not without a supernatural ally. There is an indissoluble meaning in the Lord Jesu's words. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have told you." That Spirit which moved upon the face of the waters when the earth was without form, and darkness on the face of the deep, spreads its wings over the pious biblical student, wafts away the vapours of his heart, and helps his soul from the windows of its earthly house, to look out on the city whose builder and maker is God. It is in His sunbeams that the searcher of the Old Testament finds there, the Redeemer of the New. He is seen meeting Adam and Eve as the gates of Eden clash with their expulsion ("the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"). He is seen forecast on the rude altar of Abel speaking better things than its blood. He is seen in the tender mournful utterance of the journeyman to Moriah, "My Son God will provide a lamb." He is mirrored in the mercy-seat sprinkling of Israel's great atonement day. He is seen sparkling as the most precious gem, through that rich vein of prophecy that stretches unto Bethlehem; and coming up to Him near the memor-

able fig-tree, we acknowledge the guileless Israelite's testimony, "Behold the lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world."

The Old Testament is a standing protest against the repudiators of atonement by blood; the shedding of blood is an everlasting sign of forgiveness and repentance. In olden time it was an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace. The altar comer, deeply penitent for sin, gave a token unto God of his change of heart, and in the certain fulfilment of the Divine covenant, obtained peace. The bloody sacrifices of the heathen are a blasphemy through ignorance on this ancient sign of God's mercy; they, in their superstitions, suppose that the Great Spirit, like the lions and tigers of the forest, is gratified by the sight of blood. No doubt there is amongst them some tradition of the religious rites of the Israelites, and utterly unable to grasp the *spirit* of these rites, they cleave to the material of them, and concluding that *human* blood will be the most appeasing to the Deity, sacrifice their sons and their daughters on their altars.

The *quality* of the blood had nothing to do with God's forgiveness of the sinner. It is impossible, as St. Paul says, that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. It was as I have said, merely a *sign* of propitiation, even as in baptism, the *water is a sign of heavenly benediction*. The scene of Calvary is a perpetuation of this sign of propitiation, *yet not a sign alone*. We cannot call

the sacrifice of the Lord's Christ a mere sign of heaven's mercy. The language of the New Testament conveys a more extensive meaning of the crucifixion. *He*, says St. Paul, *bare* our sins in His own body on the tree. He was offered to *bear* the sins of many. He suffered *the just for the unjust*.

It is remarkable, as if to give further confirmation of ancient types, that Jesus gave up the ghost at the time of evening oblation; that at that hour when for ages a lamb without blemish had been sacrificed in the midst of the congregation. "The lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world" gave up His life a ransom. And who can doubt that the rending of the veil of the temple and the dying words of the Saviour, "It is finished!"—were meant as a testimony of the Divine origin of former modes of mediation?

Every attentive reader of the Old Testament will have perceived in its sacred histories little expression of immortality. The manner of the death of Moses, and the translations of Enoch and Elijah, and the triumphant eloquence of David and Job, are all significant of life after death. Yet there is in respect of its proportions; *i.e.*, the length of time its events span, very little of immortality brought to light, the human mind thirsted for more revelation on this point, the discoursings of philosophers on the immortality of the soul, were not supports enough for its faith and hope. The merciful

Father, of the spirits of all flesh gave mankind the needful pledge. A Teacher came direct from God, who, by various illustrations, confirmed the instinct of the soul, that *death is not its end*. The immortality of the soul is confirmed by the inferences from our Lord's comments upon it—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And by His saying to His dying companion of Calvary—"This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." But most of all is the immortality of man confirmed by Christ's resurrection. Upon that great stone rolled away from the door of His sepulchre, the dying Christian lays his head in peace, and it yields as pleasant visions as the stone of the wilderness of Bethel yielded Jacob. From it he beholds (as it were) a ladder set up on the earth whose top reacheth unto heaven, and on the summit he beholds Him who set it up and scaled it, saying with a loud voice, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on Me shall never die."

There is another pledge of immortality. The Lord Jesus having breathed peace and consolation on the Church, and having given assurance of continued interest and attachment, ascended into heaven. The day of Pentecost is nigh at hand, and it henceforth receives new and glorious associations. The presence of the Spirit of God in the world is testified to by a marvellous sign, and on that sign the Christian, in all succeeding ages, has fixed

his eye. It is to him what the star in the East was to the wise men; it guides him to where his Lord is, and by the light of its rays his soul in darkest night reads, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

A pillar of a cloud, and a pillar of fire, was a sign to the ancient Church of the presence of the Spirit of God in her midst. The day of Pentecost is a sign to the Christian Church of the presence of the Spirit of God in *her midst*. And these morning and evening stars of the Church sing together. They are twin angels of the desert and fellow guides to Canaan.

•CHAPTER II.

A Man of the Pharisees—The Force of Christ's Miracles—The Effect of Coming to Christ—Public Worship and Preaching—Conversion—Forgiveness of Sin instantaneous—The Witness of the Spirit—Obscurations only Temporary—The Necessity of the Holy Spirit—Its Analogies—Its Residence felt and known—Its Quietness—The Mysteries of Godliness—Faith.

THE characteristics of Nicodemus are extremely interesting and admirable: he was a man of strong mind and integrity of heart, sincere and warm in all his friendships, candid and affectionate to all good men, and loved the truth for its own sake.

The fame of Jesus was in all circles of society, and had deeply impressed the Ruler of the Jews: he had exalted views of the Great Teacher, and determined to meet Him.

It must not be known. Any sort of communion with the new doctrines would injure his magistracy. He comes to the Lord by night and as by chance. There were others in conversation when he first approached, and he had been some time an attentive listener. His first address has reference to some previous argument, and is an allowance of agreement with it. It was a rightful acknowledgment and well explained. It was what the Lord said of Himself on the same grounds, "I

proceeded forth and came from God, neither came I of myself, but He sent me," (John viii. 42). "The works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." "I thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast heard Me, because of the people that stand by, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me," (John xi.). "I can of mine own self do nothing," (John v. 30). "All things are delivered me of my Father," (Matt. xi. 27).

The interview between the angel Gabriel and Mary, the song of the heavenly host, and other extraordinary circumstances of the birth of Jesus, were heard of by only few, and believed in by fewer. He came amongst the Jews as the son of Joseph, and His words *alone* would have had no permanent attention. The sermon on the mount, the Lord's prayer, the new commandment, the parable of the good Samaritan, of the talents, of the prodigal son, of the rich man and Lazarus, of the Pharisee and Publican, and of the vineyard, derived their first worship and immortality from what had been seen at the graveyard of Bethany and other places. The divinity of Christ's mission rests upon His miracles, and from them have all the mighty victories of His religion originated.

It is certain, Nicodemus came away from our Lord's presence with abiding feelings of admiration and love; he defended Him at the council of the Pharisees, and on the night of the Crucifixion brought embalmments for his burial.

The calm majesty of Jesus, the glory of His countenance, and the emphasis of His expression, were strong introductions to His marvellous sayings; yet to one of such lengthened association with ceremonial religion, and by peculiarity of education so unprepared for unseen influences, they would at first be almost unintelligible. Hours of meditation given to them, terminated as the first, with questioning doubt—"How can these things be?" and many and strong were his inward conflicts before full admission of the metaphor of "*the wind*."

Many will see in the path of Nicodemus to Christ, their own foot-prints; they have at first thought well of Him, and with increasing pleasure read his life and testament. They have felt a growing attachment to His precepts and example, and a slow yielding of thought to His revelations, until, like the witnesses of the mount of transfiguration, they have seen His face to shine as the sun and His raiment white as the light.

The reports of Christianity through preaching and congregational prayer induce men to think well of its Divine Author and to examine His testament. "They make straight the way of the Lord." They draw from the heart a sigh, and kindle in it a resolution, and create a desire for higher influences; and the Father of Light is not slow of response. The spirit that proceedeth from Him quickly meets this desire, and strengthens the love of Christ until nothing can separate it.

The changes and growth of the soul are like those of the body, *slow*, and the preacher of sudden conversion, *i.e.*, the instantaneous and permanent extinction of be-setting sin, of selfishness, worldliness, and fleshly lusts, declares a not more unlikely thing than the birth of a full-grown man. Each day of life, according to the deeds done in the body, is the soul nearer or further from heaven; like the chrysalis it is moulded by outward influences, and unshone on, will never stretch its wings. This kingdom of God within, cometh not with observation, *i.e.*, it proceedeth secretly and gradually: it is, as our Lord said, "as if a man should cast seed into the ground and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how," (Mark iv. 26). The promise to the malefactor of Calvary was *the working of a miracle*, and was as great a manifestation of Divine power as the raising of Lazarus.

The forgiveness of sin is not a *prolonged* act of God. The words of Jesus to the paralytic, "thy sins are forgiven thee," are for all, the instant they truly become His disciples. Yet, as in the arrest of bodily disease the patient requires length of time for recovery of health and strength, so in the arrest of spiritual disease the soul requires length of time for restoration. It was not until long after St. Paul's conversion, and after many confessions of lingering infirmity, that he was able to say. "I am ready to be offered." No soul after rightful entry of the path of

salvation, and swiftly overtaken by what is called death, will be refused admission at the gates of heaven. There are many mansions in our Father's house, and we may suppose without collusion with the unauthorised doctrine of purgatory, there are nurseries even in heaven, for babes in Christ.

It is said in beautiful figure of the Divine Redeemer's ministrations: "A bruised reed shall He not break and smoking flax shall He not quench." Every encouragement is given from on high to the true penitent. The witness of the Spirit of God succeeds his first prayer and strengthens his first resolves; it whispers reconciliation, and assures of future help; it inspires the blessed hope of everlasting life, and is over the soul, as the sun over the vale of Adjalon, giving cheerfulness to its conflicts, and increasing its benefactions more and more.

There are obscurations of this great luminary, as there are of the sun. Clouds and mists hide the gladdening smile of the great Lamp of day; and returning sins, dim the radiance of the Comforter; yet it is only a temporary dimness, *if the cause is only temporary*. And there are many yieldings to evil temptation ere the soul is left desolate.

Uninfluenced by the Spirit of God, the thoughts of the soul are as the pantings of the blind, and more hopeful is the helmless bark of the tempest than its lonely pilgrimage. The underground captive to whom no star ap-

peareth; the exile without relationship, are its comparisons. Unaided, it cannot pass safely the shadows of life and death; and without God, will wither like the barren fig-tree.

The operations of the Spirit of God are as those of the wind, only distinguishable by their effects. No extension of optical law giving enlargement or extra subtlety to his eye, has yet enabled man, except by its results, to detect the wind. Heat and cold are in the power of this secret messenger. Every muscle nerve and artery acknowledge its strength and nature. As the singing-bird the skies, the healthful mind and body greet its gentleness and warmth, and trembling fugitives from its changes, we seek protection by a less varying element. The wind draws us from the fire-side and drives us back to it; it has in a large measure our movements and physical health under control. *Its agency is easily defined, yet not its origin form and substance.* So is the Spirit of God. Its works, its qualities begotten in the heart, are easy of understanding and description. The fruits of the Spirit of God are, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, &c. Yet how these fruits are produced, how they are made to spring from, and occupy the place of their opposites, passeth all understanding. From the distillings of this holy visitant the heart awakens early and late refreshed: as the dew-drops on the field are its sunshine showers, yet how they are inspired is as great a mystery as the first

entrance of the soul into the body: as silent and imperceptible as its taking possession and release, is the coming of the Holy Ghost.

The spirit that returns to God who gave it, knows well when this incense of heaven is on its altar, and this air of heaven beneath its wings. It opens its cup to its sweet savours as the lilies of the vale to the beams of sunrise, and in the arms of God, mounts supernaturally upward. True-patriot-like, it springs on its feet when this sweet music of its national anthem sanctifies the earthly tabernacle, and in the raptures of situation and expectancy exclaims, "This is the gate of heaven."

The analogy of the wind and the work of the Spirit of God, is only in respect of their *invisibility*. The wind is changeable. God is without variableness or shadow of turning. The wind is boisterous and at seasons strews the sea and land with wreck. The effect of Divine influences is calmness and serenity. The troubled spirit rests on God, as the ark rested on Ararat. He is an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast.

The uproar of religious meetings is not the attribute of God. It is the spirit of antichrist. The transformation of Satan into an angel of light. The emblem of the Holy Ghost by the waters of Jordan, proclaimed the nature of its dismissal; and the sons of thunder who call fire from heaven deserve the rebuke of their ancestors—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

We are surrounded by mysteries. The conception and birth of our bodies is a mystery. "We are fearfully and wonderfully made." The wild man of the tombs might tell the Gadarenes *he had no existence*. A Solomon could not by relationship of cause and effect, *account for his own existence*. There are facts in science as untraceable as the path of a comet, and there are facts in religion as immeasurable as some depths of ocean.

A true philosopher will welcome a discovery though he cannot exactly see its first and its last. A true Christian will welcome a Divine revelation though he only knows a few of its characteristics. It is said the appliances of steam and electricity are only in their infancy, yet the sound mind sees not in their probable development a diminishing of present value. It thankfully receives their first-fruits, and patiently awaits an increase. We know that here we have comparatively but the beginning of the scheme of Christianity. "We see through a glass darkly." Yet the wise disciple spoils not his foretaste by impatient anticipations. He gratefully listens to the many echoes that from the spiritual world break through into his soul, and without wavering, awaits the fuller tide of revelation. There are not wanting to him continual and distinct signs of an outside kingdom that cannot be moved, a kingdom nearer than the nearest star. God, said the orator of Mar's Hill, is not far from every one of us. Millions of spiritual creatures, said Milton, walk the earth unseen,

and One greater than these, ascended into heaven, was in hearing of the Damascus Traveller. The probability is, that the earth is but a garden of the celestial world, a recruiting province of a higher hierarchy, a satellite of one of the many mansions of our Father's house. There are dark spots on the face of the sun, and there are shadows before the city of foundations. Faith, said the Lord of Calvary, removes these mountains. Have faith in the goodness and power of God. Only believe and thou shalt see the salvation of God.

CHAPTER III.

Conscience: its Powers: its Effects discernible—Depravity gradual—The Period of Mental Digestion—Death startling to those familiar with it in Others—Wealth not sufficient for Old Age—What Conscience is—Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost—The Worm that dieth not.

EVERY man knows he has a conscience; but not every man knows what conscience is. The most depraved of human natures feel the inconvenience of this inseparable companionship. It is the mark set upon Cain. The irremovable brand of the fugitive and vagabond. There are securities from legal punishment for the vilest, and many criminals of every degree *apparently* escape retribution. Premeditative cunning cannot however provide against this adversary, and no ill-gained advantage, large or small, can always restrain its voice, "Conscience makes cowards of us all." It can break the trance of the drunkard and the song of revelry, it can make the cruel tremble, the hypocrite sick, and the thief uneasy. The laughter of its remorse is hollow, and its *lonely* sting intolerable.

It is easy to observe in men of known unscrupulousness a continual restlessness. The power of reflection, so sweet to the exercise of the just, they dare not use; the pleasures of memory, sweeter than honey to the man of

God, are to them worse than lost; and in the excitement of banquetting, novel pursuits and varying scenes they leave the past behind, and conscience out of breath.

This mode of action, though partly successful, is not lasting. The irregularities of excitement waste the vigour of the nerves and produce bodily disease; stimulants lose their strong influence on the brain; and conscience, as the forked flash of sullen cloud, darts from their fumes to pierce with many sorrows. Her handwriting in the ancient form, is then ever before the thoughts, and its interpretation requires neither soothsayer or astrologer.

Familiarity with crime has a course of introduction. There are first shudderings at deeds that are afterwards remorselessly done. Conscience, God's beacon in the soul, is not soon extinguished, and not in a day, is His image in man lost.

Although by rapid strides the excesses of iniquity are not generally reached, *their first path* is not less fearful. There are dazzlings at the mouth of the cave that have a fascination to the lingerer, and lure him to destruction as the taper lures the moths.

In considering *the degrees of crime*, the region of *thought and feeling* must be passed into, as well as that riper sphere where thoughts and feelings have gone into action.

There are (as in the path of iniquitous action) many steps in the path of iniquitous thought and feeling; there are thoughts which the mind at first shrinks from, which

by degrees it comes to allow. And there is equal need of forethought for the consequences of these, as of *evil deeds*.

There is a creature of the American forests that fastening on the slumbers of its prey, intensifies them during the exhaustion of life by the friction of its wings. This is the way sin uses the soul. It lulls it during destruction. There are not wanting everywhere illustrations of this. There are men whose ill appetites from year to year grow without the invasion of conscience. Her voice is hid in the black waves of the heart as the diamond in the sand. *But she will*, as aforesaid, *be heard before death*. She will break out from the mists of iniquity and stand in the way of the sinner as the angel before Balaam; she will toll the bell of eternity in his ears, and pray him not to fix her future orbit amidst the blackness of darkness for ever. Sometimes her drawn sword and funeral knell will startle efficaciously, and hands and heart will be lifted up on high for the grace of need. Sometimes penitence will be delayed to the hour of dissolution, when fevers are withering the nerves, and the spirit like helpless bird of hurricane, is being driven against its will to judgment.

In their accumulation of crime, men forget that period of mental digestion when the hope of the future must either be supported or extinguished by the past. When the spirit is, as it were, shut up with memory, and

reflection is its only employment. When the palsied hand can no more strike its long-numbered monitor, and the flesh indulge. The king's invitation to his palace was of no avail to the aged Barzillai. He well replied, "Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" Remembrance with a conscience void of offence towards God and man *is the music of old age*. The labours and sorrows of this period are constantly before our *eyes*, but not sufficiently before our *thoughts*.

In our observations of men; their motives and actions, their temper and disposition, their consequences and their weaknesses, we much neglect a *personal* application; we approve or disapprove another's motive and act without searching for its likeness in our own breast and conduct; we read the hearts of others without self-comparison; and we discern in our fellows the issues of frailty sin and passion with insufficient warning. We regard with pity and respect the helplessness and the pains of old age; *we forget they are our own inheritance*; we grieve for and relieve the miseries of a neighbour, *without leaving their path*.

"Men think all men mortal but themselves." There are people who meet death with extreme surprise and alarm, to whom its countenance in all forms must have been familiar: the cemetery and churchyard are favourite Sabbath walks: the emblem flowers and trees have an interesting sadness, and there are mournful associations to

which friendship's tear is tributary. *We think oftener of the graves of others than our own.*

There is a wilful and weak shortsightedness most culpable in itself and awful in its consequences. Much of the future is hid, but infirmity and death are certain, and for their succession all should prepare. "The years draw nigh when we shall say I have no pleasure in them ;" and one event happeneth unto all, and after that the judgment. The author of the burial service chapter has given us a suitable text. "I die daily," *i.e.*, I have each day before my mind the hour of death. I have repeatedly in my calculations the solemn moment when my soul must leave the body.

The ant and the bee in their provisions teach man a reproachful lesson. Their occupations of summer have full reference to the winter, and the quality of their store is suitable. Men often eat the bread of carefulness in vain. Securities and title deeds of property are not the only covering for gray hairs ; the strong box may be full and the soul lean ; the pecuniary resource may be large and the *immortal* ill clad as Lazarus at the gate.

Of a truth, the compassion of God is not bound. He has at times interposed in the course of natural law, and He has and may, at times, interfere in the course of spiritual law. Yet the general analogy of nature gives little hope to the neglectful soul. There is no harvest where there has been no sowing, and the old tree will not bend.

Balaam the son of Beor, longed for both the wages of unrighteousness and the death of the just. *His grave was with the fighters against God.* "No man can serve two masters, and what concord hath Christ with Belial."

We have seen that conscience may be hushed but not extinguished, that sooner or later sin's chloroform fails to beget insensibility, and that as the trumpeter of earthly assize, she proclaims judgment to come. *Experience* is not the only teacher of the immortality of conscience. If organic terms are applicable to spiritual creatures, *conscience* is but a *faculty* of another. The *soul* is its source, and it is in degree of relationship to it, as the tongue is to the body, and is the interpreter of its approbations and warnings. It is the voice of that breath of life breathed into the nostrils of Adam and every man, and it made him, and makes each one of his posterity, feel their nakedness.

We have in former leaves seen the incapability of the soul with this and other inherent powers (on account of the corruptions of its flesh through a fall) to cut its way back to heaven, and that specially through the mediation of Christ, the Holy Spirit of God is omnipresent and assistant to the desiring pilgrim. His desire must however be sincere honest and constant; it must be with a steadfast purpose of new life; it must have no covenant fraud with the flesh, it must not be carried about with every wind.

No language of Christ is more severe than the denun-

ciation of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and he who by a long course of self-deception and presumptuous sin is thus guilty, has himself shut the door of Divine mercy, and hath no more forgiveness in this world, or hope of it, in the world to come. There is henceforth a great gulf between his soul and God, and there is not a drop of cold water to cool its tongue. *It is left to itself*, and fire is not so consuming as its own procurances and their reflection and despair. This is the worm that dieth not, the lake of fire, and the smoke of torment that ascendeth for ever and ever.

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CHAPTER IV.

What Prayer is : its Comprehensiveness—Difference Between a Oath and a Lie—Insincere Prayer a Sin—The Form of Prayer—The Advantage of a Pre-composed Form of Prayer—Beauty of the Church of England's Prayer—A Divine Illustration of Prayer.

PRAYER is the special expression of the thoughts and feelings to God. In connexion with His omniscience and omnipresence, all *indirect* expressions of thought and feeling have resemblance to prayer. We cannot converse with man without indirectly conversing with God. This aspect of prayer includes also those countless thoughts and feelings which flow and flash across the heart as northern lights across the night sky. There may be a distinct act of prayer, without any verbal expression. When the winds are away and the ocean basks quietly in the sun, how noiselessly the tides fulfil their march. When the child of God is in retired meditation in the sunshine of the Holy Ghost how silently his heart's tide proceeds to the throne of God. A beautiful illustration of silent prayer is to be found in 1 Samuel i. Hannah, a woman of a sorrowful spirit, came into the temple, "and it came to pass as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard."

Prayer, as aforesaid, is a special expression of the heart and mind to God ; its distinctive feature is its direct appeal to His surrounding presence. In the taking of an oath, the witness appeals to God for his truthfulness : God is the witnesser of a lie as well as a perjury. The invocation of His name throws not words following, more into the glare of His omniscience and omnipresence. Apart from this solemnity of reference, a man's speech would be as strongly encircled.

The distinction between a lie and a perjury is *in their degree of presumptuousness*. In the hurry and presence of circumstance, a liar may fail to realize the presidency of God. A perjurer cannot, for he has just acknowledged and invited it.

This illustration helps the understanding in the distinction between ordinary speech and prayer, and between ordinary thought and feeling, and prayerful thought and feeling. Language is never out of the Divine presence, therefore though directly used for man, is indirectly used for God.

Unspoken thoughts and feelings are never out of the Divine presence ; therefore, though entwining earthly objects, have ever God's companionship. Prayer however makes a particular dedication of thought and language to God—hence its greater solemnity of conversation.

In his description of chaos, Moses says, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The

Spirit of God moves on the face of each heart, and not a thought breaketh or a word riseth unmarked. There is then a degree of seriousness attachable to all our thoughts and words, but when by the act of prayer they are specially consecrated to God, an extraordinary responsibility is involved.

Insincerity and frivolity in common conversation are a trifling with God's omnipresence; how much more when associated with prayer. It is a strong sin to tell God an untruth in prayer, to express sorrow that is unfelt, and ask spiritual benefits really undesired.

The form of prayer is usually bent knees, clasped hands, and closed eyes. Kneeling is a sign of reverence, clasped hands of earnestness, and closed eyes of absorption. There may be the form of prayer without the spirit of prayer, and there may be the spirit of prayer without the form; yet is it highly expedient that congregational prayer should have a reverential, earnest, and devoted appearance, for in every religious assembly there are attenders for mere custom's sake, whose senses and thoughts are ever on the ramble, and take licence of boldness and levity from the sight of irregular attitudes, but often feel a rebuke springing from comeliness of prayer.

It is well for members of the Church of England quickly to have engraven on their memories her beautiful morning and evening service, so that there be no

distraction of leaf-turning, or place-finding, and that the mind may abandon itself more wholly and fervently to the Divine presence. Words have not then to be searched for or expected, but seem to come inspiringly from the heart. This seems to be the prominent advantage of precomposed forms of prayer; that the heart is not in ministerial suspense before its—Amen—and can in its non-necessity of listening, have full conjunction.

Congregational extemporary prayer very much resembles congregational preaching; the minister in pious sentences expresses human needs and thanksgiving; what particular need or thanksgiving he is in proceeding about to express, the congregation cannot know until expressed; they are therefore in the position of listeners for edification, and doubtless listening with propriety of heart and mind are nurtured, even as listeners with propriety of heart and mind to preaching, are nurtured.

The action of listening during the offering up of prayer by another, is an interruption to the full warm flow of the heart. Hence the importance of having portions of the Prayer-book printed on the memory, and of having one undeviating comprehensive form of family prayer, and of making its acquirement by domestics and children, a household rule. The store-houses of memory receive from the Prayer-book lines of unequalled beauty, tenderness, fervour, and comprehension; and prayer, either in public or private, ever finds them a precious source to draw from.

According to their several necessities, our Liturgy each Sabbath renews its supplications for The Queen, The Royal Family, The Parliament, The Councillors, The Nobility, The Ministers of religion, All Congregations, The Traveller, The Sick, the Prisoner, the Fatherless, the Widow, all young Children, The Wanderer, The Penitent, the Oppressed, and our enemies.

So comprehensive and adapted is this procession to all sorts and conditions of men, that no stray worshipper will ever find his peculiar case omitted or mis-stated.

The duty of prayer is strongly enforced in the Bible. Aaron and his sons were instructed to offer it up continually in the midst of the people; and the Lord Jesus added to precepts and example, words of prayer.

The proper spirit of prayer, *i.e.*, the state of heart in which God should be sought in prayer, is illustrated by our Saviour in a parable. A Pharisee and Publican happened to meet in the temple for the same object. Not likeing to kneel by the side of one so inferior in worldly rank, the Pharisee strode contemptuously apart from the Publican, and presented to God words of self-adulation, ostentation, and uncharitableness. The Publican, bending his head with a sense of unworthiness, pressed a sigh from his heart, and confessingly and penitently implored mercy. These two petitions met at the throne of God, but an answer came back only to one; and in the place of that heavy vented penitential sigh returned

to dwell the Holy Spirit's witness, the spirit of adoption, whereby prodigal sons call God, Father. The Publican now feels in his heart wings like eagles, opening his eyes and raising them in joyful gratitude to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. He went forth from his door weeping, bearing the precious seed of godly repentance in his heart. Now he returns rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him, the sheaves of righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost.

The Publican had finished his short acceptable prayer long before the Pharisee's vain repetitions were ended, and had left the temple, whilst he was yet standing haughtily before the altar. See now this ceremonious hypocrite with measured paces and flouncing robes proceed out of the sanctuary to market-place greetings, his eyes first making a circuit of the holy place, in the hope there were some human witnesses of his prayers, and his heart propping itself with many lying conceits. He has gained nothing by his temple visit, and with a kind of instinct, that in the most self-deceived hearts *will* whisper, want, he endeavours to amend heaven's deafness by man's commendations. After each salute he contrives an allusion to his pre-occupation, and from the impressions of his piety on other minds, tries to obtain compensation for his recent performance in the house of God.

The Evangelist says, Our Lord directed this parable in reproof of people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, *i.e.*, who were

guided by the voice of their own hearts as to their spiritual stature, and from their own fancied spiritual height, estimated others as dwarfs in comparison. It is not by looking admiringly at *ourselves* we become wise unto salvation: it is not by counting the number and length of our daily prayers that we grow in grace: it is not by unfolding the scroll of our alms deeds that we lay up treasure in heaven. It is by looking into the Bible, that our spiritual state is seen: it is by looking into the life of the Son of God that the health of the soul is sustained: it is by looking at the great Calvary alms deed of Jesus, that the soul calculates its title to heaven. One of the surest signs of alienation from God, is self-righteousness by fellow contrast. The true servant will ever be sensible of short comings, and ever inclined to esteem others better than himself.

The Pharisee and Publican stood afar off from each other in their motives of prayer. The one as an advocate, the other as a convict, and they stood afar from each other in the sight of heaven, the one as a stranger, the other as a fellow citizen.

It is well when we bend the knee in the closet or sanctuary to cross-examine ourselves. What has brought us to this attitude? A deep sense of sin, the fear and love of God, an earnest desire for mercy had brought the Publican on his knees, and it is only like precedents, that can make any man's prayer obtain the sympathy and assistance of heaven.

CHAPTER V.

Parable of Dives and Lazarus—Parable of the dishonest Steward—Wealth not generally Promotive of Generosity—Death of Lazarus—Death of Dives—Their Funerals—Inferences of the Parable—Honesty a great, rare, and comprehensive Virtue—The Artifice of the Steward—Meaning of our Lord's Comment: "Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness."

THE first sentence of the parable of Dives and Lazarus states a condition which most people desire. To be rich is to have at command the necessities and luxuries of this life. All the fruits of the earth are at hand to the rich; and thought, and fancy, and affection, seem to grow and prosper in their hands; yet the influences of riches on the heart are not generous; unchecked, they inspire selfishness, and narrow sympathy. The poor man oftener halves his crust with a needy brother than the rich man a tithe of his abundance. For noble acts of self-denial and disinterestedness, search the short and simple annals of the poor. Yet there are exceptions to this immorality of wealth, in men whose power and will are largely equal, who feel the hearts of the destitute beat in their own, and love to pick the thorn from human sores.

There is in the possession of riches, freedom from much anxiety; yet are there responsibilities and temptations

which prevent the true Christian's eager desire for it. It was in estimate of these our Lord said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God." Not that in the lease-hold of property there is inherent disqualification for heaven, but an extraordinary difficulty of resistance, in its developments. It was not because Dives had the means of procuring purple and linen and sumptuous food that he came into condemnation; it was because *he misappropriated those means, forgot in self-gratification, his duty to his neighbour, and in all ways prostrated the stewardship of God.* (See St. Matt. xxv.) See approaching his gate, with bent back and shivering gait, a poor man who has had no breakfast to fortify him against the cold, wet, and wind. Frequent exposure to weather and want has caused issues in his flesh; and some dogs, at first angry, but afterwards sympathising, lick his sores. He asks in vain for a *morsel of bread*, and returns to his cot to die. Hunger cold and solitude are not new to him, yet there are other strange feelings around his spirit, and its flesh-bonds seem loosening. An old sweetener of grief, the hymn of Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," comes with exceeding strength to his thoughts, and thrills his feeble frame. And there appears to have broken his loneliness two or three benevolent-looking beings. Their communion words are indistinct, but soothing. A shining hand touches away his startled tears, and the pains in his limbs gradually cease. Lazarus

is no longer poor. Angels have taken him where there is neither sorrow nor crying. It is from such death-beds is heard a voice from heaven saying, write, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours." It is from such death-beds that the Corinthian song of incorruptibility "Oh death, where is thy sting! Oh grave, where is thy victory!" breaks with fresh hallelujahs. It is from such translations that the faithful poor in their tribulations feel anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power.

A neighbour, not hearing his usual twilight hymn, opens Lazarus's door, and receiving no answer, steps to his bed-side; there, streaked by the moon-beams, is to be seen in death his pale and hollow face. Some more villagers enter, and talk of the loneliness of his end. They know not of the foot-prints beneath their own, and that ambassadors of the King of kings have preceded them. The sun sets twice, and towards the hour of his decline a thin procession enters the churchyard; they approach an open grave, singing the song of Moses "Make us glad according to the days Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil;" and they form only a small circle around it; and their tears are more of pity than love. But Lazarus requires not human sympathy. He is in Abraham's bosom. He is with the Friend of God, near to God himself, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets.

▷ The grass has not grown over Lazarus's mound ere it is
■ reported from house to house that Dives is on his death-
■ bed. There is much sensation in the village, for though
■ an exacting and contemptuous landlord; the knock of
■ death at castle gates strikes the common mind with
special awe. These poor people, always regarding their
master "as a strong man armed keeping his palace," are
now much startled that a "*stronger than he has come to
take the armour wherein he trusted.*"

In a spacious room, with every appliance of cheerful and comfortable furniture, on a soft couch, leans a dying man. A physician, by that wrist-chronometer, (the pulse), is counting out his earthly moments. His wife and children and many friends are around him, and in their large tears may be read his good social qualities. Dives is in what is termed a state of insensibility, *i.e.*, his physical organs have not power to express his mind. But there is an awful hidden conflict proceeding: the flesh and spirit are having their last battle, and amidst fierce convulsions are separating for ever.

In a little while the widow and fatherless, and friends and physician, have left the room, and the corpse of Dives awaits burial preparations. In cedar and velvet it is drawn by many horses, to the churchyard of Lazarus: their bodies now almost mingle; but there is a great gulf between their souls: one is in happiness: the other is in misery, and they are conscious of one another's position

and its difference. *Lazarus cannot assist Dives, though he knows how much he needs alleviation; and Dives cannot assist himself, though he knows happiness to be near.*

The conversation between Abraham and Dives is introduced by our Saviour to show that the future punishment of the wicked is severe, irremediable, and that they have amidst it, a knowledge of what they might have gained. *Dives in this life abused his privileges, therefore suffers in the next.* Lazarus nobly and righteously sustains his hardships in this life, and is therefore comforted in the next.

In testimony of the ample provision of Divine revelation, the conversation respecting Dives' brethren is introduced. There was impression, guidance, and guardianship enough in the writings of Moses and the prophets; in their words and works there had been an evident inspiration from God; and if this failed to arouse; the inspiration and vision of a once-departed soul would not succeed.

Honesty is a great comprehensive and rare quality. It has to do with religion, society, and commerce.

The Holy Spirit of God will not relieve and bless a dishonest repentance; love and friendship endure not without honesty of foundation; and without honesty commerce ceases to live and grow. "Honesty is the best policy," says an old proverb. Its repudiation may sometimes bring *temporary advantage*, but that advantage like

highly-dyed garments, wears badly in the sun. The unjust steward prospered only for a time, and then rolled down hill, like a broken rock.

Honesty has to do with thought and feeling as well as money: a false profession of thought feeling and opinion is dishonesty; a condemnation of our own secret practices in another, is dishonesty; taking the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils is dishonesty; ascribing to our actions untrue motives is dishonesty.

How often are words uttered to misrepresent the feelings and thoughts of the heart. How often are actions censured, that are by the censurer, daily done. How often is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper taken by the adulterer, the fornicator, the drunkard, and the malicious; and how often are the most selfish deeds, attributed by the doer, to pure motives. Honesty is both a rare and comprehensive virtue.

There are some striking examples in the Bible of various forms of dishonesty in the lives of Adam, Cain, Abraham, Balaam, Ananias and Sapphira, Simon the sorcerer, Herod, Judas Iscariot, and the Pharisees.

It appears some one cognizant of a steward's ill official conduct, accused him before his lord; not able to explain satisfactorily the charge, he was given notice to retire. It was an awkward position: he was well educated, luxurious, yet dependant on his vocation; manual labour would soon kill him; and begging would be an intolerable shame.

He hit upon a subtle remedy for his prostration. His lord's tenants were summoned, and handed a receipt for rent they had not paid. Thus he bound them by gratitude and fear. They were relieved of an impost, and to communicate the mode of that relief, would be their own ruin. The transaction was however in the course of time detected, and the proprietor of the estate, though a loser, could not help extolling its contrivance. He commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely, and our Saviour thus commented on the steward's plans. — "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations" *i.e.*, schemers for this world only, adapt better means to their ends, and are quicker in the arrest of opportunity, than candidates for heaven, and that these ought to be as open-eyed, self-denying, and energetic in their course, as the others are in theirs.

With what determination, perseverance, circumvention, and revision a man steps towards this life's ambition. See how to bring nearer the prize of his affections, he rises early and so late takes rest, and eats the bread of carefulness.

Is not this compassing and activity worthy of an incorruptible crown. Ought not the aspirant to heaven to be jealous of it with a godly jealousy.

Ascending to this world's honours is only by hard labour,

endurance, and concentration. Ascending to the next's, is not without striving and wrestling and chastisement.

There is needed in all society, a stronger impression of existence after death, and a more vivid realization of the rewards of the righteous.

The grave is too much looked at, and the immortality of the spirit too little. The most striking, most winning, yet most simple assurance of the destinies of God's people, is to be found in the Saviour's words: "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you." There is here a clearness, (and if we may so speak it reverently) an honesty, powerful of conviction and comfort. Lay hold (says St. Paul) on eternal life. Lay hold properly and comprehensively on such Divine statements as these. Surely the Christ of God is fairer than the children of men; full of grace are his lips, and in Him, the way the truth and the life, is the true disciple blessed for ever. He hath not left the world without a witness of His mission. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The New Testament that He set a red seal to on Calvary, is an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. And there descends upon the loving follower of Jesus, an inspiration, properly called by him the Comforter. It is the dew of His blessing. It touches the prayerful, as the angel Gabriel touched Daniel at the hour of oblation.

It brings to the human spirit what the ravens brought to Elijah, morning and evening sustenance. It cheers the ancient dove with olive leaf cheered Noah in his ark, and as the ascending and descending angels, cheered the Israelites in the night season.

CHAPTER VI.

Bethany and Nain—The Resurrection of the Dead—The beautiful human sympathy of Our Lord—Sleep and Death compared—Faith's Resting Place—The Meeting of Friends after mutual bereavement: its effect—Death and its Comprehensions—The Gates of the City—Circumstances of Miracle—Effects of a Funeral Procession.

THERE was a beautiful sympathy of love and friendship in the Saviour, and it often prompted Him to use His divine power. The poverty of a marriage feast influenced his first miracle in Cana, and the tears of a childless woman and of bereaved sisters to work his greatest.

See Him journeying to His old friends at Bethany, and to the churchyard where their brother was laid. He tells His companions affectionately and hopefully His errand, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go to awake him out of sleep."

The term "Sleep" is often used in the New Testament for Death: "I would not have you ignorant concerning them which are asleep:" "Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep."

It is only by experience, the sensations and perceptions of "dying" can be fully ascertained. The immortal spirit watches with feeble, or no power of *description*, the ebb-tide of the heart; yet *sleep* yields an idea of death, for

death is only overpowering and extended sleep, and we know the spiritual sensations and perceptions of sleep. The soul then steps into the garden of memory and feeds like the bee upon its flowers, and sometimes her meal has a bitter, and sometimes a sweet taste. May not the process and act of *death* be but a strong repetition of these wanderings and awakings.

Our fitness for departure is however of more importance than the scenery of departure. We need be in no doubt as to the *formation* of this, and with the Divine text "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," the believer rests contentedly on the cliffs of time. In his patience he possesses his soul, calmly and firmly reposing upon the omnipotence, and goodness of God. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in this first resurrection, this raising of faith to behold and to labour and to wait. To him hath already come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, the Son of God.

The new birth of a soul is a great miracle. Habituated to lust and passion, the sensualism of the body, and the libertinism of the affections, who shall roll away the stone from the door of its sepulchre; who shall sound the drum of its ear; who shall bring it up from its deep. The Lord of Bethany.—"Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Accept the health and freedom and safety offered thee by the missionary Son of God. Refuse Him not the satisfaction of His travail; nor dismiss Him with a fresh thorn in His crown, lest He come to thee next as a judge.

In reaching forward to the future destinies of man, the expansion of his mind, and the change of his body, we must surround all our thoughts with the omnipotence of God. Is any thing too hard for Him? It is the unlimited power of God that keeps the mind firm and faithful in its gazings into light and immortality, and that fills with joy, its anticipations of progress from a body terrestrial to a body celestial.

Perhaps it is not well to soar too high or too forward, for there are green pastures and still waters in the low-lands, and the patient disciple has fewer waverings than the impetuous. The mariner in his voyages is content with his chart and compass until his haven cliffs come in sight, and the patient Christian is content with his Bible until heaven comes in sight. Peter's swiftmess did not bring him in time to the tomb of Arimathæa, but the quiet disciples of Emmaus met and conversed with the risen Saviour.

The meeting of Jesus with Martha and Mary brought immediately their dead brother to mind, and they both exclaimed "Lord if Thou hadst been here our brother had not died." It is always so after sad bereavement. The mourner meets a dear friend, and immediately all the processions of his loss are revived. He seems again to stand

with yearnings by his sick : and with sigh and blood-tear to press the pulse. Again he seems to bend o'er the grave, and to hear the sprinkled earth make heavy the dedication words, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes." Then comes an increased warmth and clinging to remaining friends, and the one met, seems more than ever precious. After the first flood of grief, the friendship of Jesus seemed doubly necessary to Martha and Mary, and they clung to Him with greater fervour and repose.

It is appointed unto all men once to die. A time arrives to every man when he must bow his head and give up the ghost. Accident or disease may bring that time very soon, but age is sure to bring it before very long. St. Paul says, that death entered into the world by sin. And the connexion of sin and death can to some extent be traced. The first of our race abused by concupisence the privileges of a free will. There was a slow poison in the forbidden fruit, and the second command of Sinai was before delivery illustrated. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children.

The children have first an hereditary tendency to death, and secondly, they eat again and again of the forbidden fruit; and the more they eat of it, the sooner they die. Intemperance, impurity, passion, &c., in proportion to their indulgence, hasten death.

It is not easy to ascertain the sensations of death : they

must be very variable according to the state of the mind and body.

The calm ebbing of the sea-tide, seems to give an idea of the process of old age death, when no aches fill the subsiding pulse.

The rushing of the wind through the forest, seems to give an idea of the process of convulsive death, and the crash of a thunderbolt, an idea of sudden death.

The spiritual anticipations of death are however the most fearful. Few men believe death to be annihilation. The soul will not allow this infidelity, and is continually from within asserting her immortality; and death-bed watchers observe her intelligence in full collection, when physical exhaustion is almost complete.

Because, as aforesaid, of the gradual suspension of the expressive organs, it cannot be fully obtained from any patient, what in detail, the last earthly conflict is; but we all know who meets the soul at the end of the valley. It is this prospect of God that makes dying terrible. During this life we recognise His presence, we see Him mirrored in His works, in the sun, moon, stars, the fertile hills and plains, the rivers and the ocean, and in ourselves, but in dying, we expect to meet *Him through other* emblems, and in closer communion.

Interwoven as mind is with matter, it is difficult to realize its capacity and action in separation. Will it ever long be separate from a body? St. Paul says, there are

bodies celestial as well as terrestrial, and that when this earthly house is dissolved, the soul has a building; that he has a desire to depart to Christ, yet not remain unclothed, but be clothed *upon*.

It is in the history of God's well-beloved Son that our thoughts of eternity learn contentment, and that they are reconciled to their present captivity. Jesus died and lived again and is alive for evermore; and because He lives we shall live also. We take our doubts and throw them amongst the empty linen clothes of Arimathæa. We look at the family vault in the light of that first day of the week's accomplishment, and we see the stone rolled away. We know that "our Redeemer liveth," and we say to death and the grave, Where is thy sting? Where is thy victory.

It is remarkable that at Bethany and Nain our Lord, before His *own personal encounter*, overcame death. Outside the gates of Nain He met a funeral procession. There are degrees of bereavement, and in the circumstances of this mournful train, were the most afflicting. The chief mourner was a woman, and she had followed the bier before. She was going to lay her only son in her husband's grave, "and much people of the city was with her."

These sympathizing neighbours hoped by their attendance to ease her path of tears; and the Lord also had compassion on her.

Isaiah says, that Jesus had not much beauty or comeliness of form, yet there must have been at times in His countenance "the Father's glory."

The money-changers in the temple were driven into obedience by this, and the ruffians of Gethsemane struck to the ground. It was certainly visible in a large degree, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and, had human eyes been permitted to follow, would have been so in an extraordinary manner, during those whole nights of prayer He passed in the mountains.

Before raising Lazarus from the grave, the Saviour prayed and gave thanks: "I thank Thee, oh Father, Thou hast heard Me." In the raising the widow of Nain's son, He was not heard to pray, yet were there invisible communion signs between Him and His Father. The heavenly *voice of Jordan resounded not at Bethany, yet he said, "I thank Thee Thou hast heard Me."*

Both at Bethany and Nain He spake as one having authority: "Lazarus, come forth." "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." And to both commands there was an immediate response. Lazarus came forth bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and the widow's son sat up and began to speak.

The re-union of the soul with its former body is a great and comprehensive work, and has rarely been permitted by God. Elijah restored to this life the only son of a widow, and at The Crucifixion, many bodies of the saints were re-invested.

Lazarus and the others raised, must have been able to tell strange things of hereafter, but perhaps, like St. Paul's heavenly experiences, they were not lawful to be uttered.

There was in our Lord's address to the widow a sweet plaintive prophetic tone, and when she raised her hood to look at Him, a beam of hope flashed in her eyes.

It was near His own tomb, where His own body had (like the one just given a fresh life) lain in death, He bade another woman not to weep. It was Mary Magdalene, whom he had rescued from profanity, and she also in the recognition of His voice ceased to weep. He himself knew how to mourn. The tombs of Bethany and the hill of Jerusalem received His tears, and the groves of Gethsemane beheld them red as blood, trickling down to the ground.

In one of His parables, the Saviour pathetically depicts the meeting, after long absence, of parent and child. When the father saw afar off his beloved son, he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. He had much to forgive him, but affection blotted out past memories.

The widow of Nain had *nothing* to forgive her son. He had since his father's death, been in every way a comfort and support to her, and she also fell on his neck and kissed him. She wept tears of joy. The heart gives forth showers in both sunshine and cloud, yet the refraction of its rays, as the noon-tide shower on the horizon, lifts a bow upon the brow, and it is easy to distinguish joy from grief.

There are moments when feelings roll so thickly over the soul that she cannot find for her thoughts vent of expression. It was one of these when the widow received back

her son. She folded him in silence to her heart, and the choristers of the procession changed their Psalm and glorified God, saying, "A great Prophet hath arisen up and God hath visited His people."

The slow march of a funeral procession through the streets and gates of a city is often the sower of much and fruitful thought.

Many people who will neither think nor talk about death, come to the windows when a hearse is passing, and the footsteps of the careless and the stranger slacken pace as its dark shadows flicker on the pavement. From these shadows there comes through into the heart, like the wind-plaint through the lattice, a foreboding of judgment, and an irresistible application of thought. Some day there will be a repetition of this scene with *an alteration*—an alteration not of more importance to the people at the windows and the strangers in the streets, yet of vast more importance to the thinker.

The stiff cold pale form beneath these plumes will one day be our own, and its followers our kinsmen and friends. Will there be any Saviour as at Nain, to meet and joyfully dismiss that procession? Will the Keyholder of death and the grave demonstrate on the spot His own blessed words: "I am the resurrection and the life?" No, these ancient marvels of Bethany and Nain were for the strengthening of Christianity's youth, and are not now in her healthful maturity, needful of repetition: and as touching the dead

that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses how in the bush, God spake unto him saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. The cold stiff pale form beneath these plumes is *not the man*, it is only his old clothing. The mind is the man. The mind is the immortal identity of the man. The death-blow of dissolution is merely as a change of apparel, and many hours before the decent laying aside of the old, the spirit in its new garments meets the Lord of Bethany and Nain.

CHAPTER VII.

Two Conversions—The Ethiopian and Naaman—The Meeting of Philip with the Ethiopian—The Happiness of turning many to Righteousness—Baptism and Confirmation—A Skeleton in every House—The Love of Christ extendeth itself—Leprosy and Sin—Naaman's First and Last Reception of the Prophet's Instructions and its Spiritual Deductions.

DAVID describes a trustful man of God passing through a parched valley with heavenly dews on his heart, as happy as if streams of water gave his path music and refreshment.

Isaiah in the prospect of Messiah describes the wilderness and the solitary place glad, and the desert in bloom.

Many centuries after the flash of this beautiful inspired poetry, it receives an illustration. A messenger of God's will, an angel of the Lord, bade Philip an evangelist proceed towards a desert place of southern Palestine. On the borders of this wilderness the carriage of a man of rank came in sight, and immediately Philip felt a holy influence to become acquainted with its occupant. Hastening down a bye path, he placed himself in advance on the high road, and as the chariot slowly overtook him, he heard in tones of tender mournful interest the reading of Esaias, where he describes the humiliation and meekness of the patient Saviour.

Turning round, Philip in a respectful manner asked if the reader understood these lines? and in courteous reply

received himself a half question: "How can I except some man guide me?" A question followed by an invitation of companionship, and a second inquiry—*if* Essai's depiction was of himself or some other.

Philip immediately explained, and applied the fulfilment of the words to the Lord Jesus Christ, and no doubt further enlarged on the grand scheme and constitution of Christianity, for on passing by a stream, the Ethiopian desired its admission rite of baptism. Philip expressed willingness if the necessary correspondent, faith, were added. In a firm sincere tone the Ethiopian replied, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. These two good men then proceeded in solemn thankfulness to the administration of the sacrament of baptism, and in prayerful committal of themselves to God, parted, the Spirit of God leading Philip towards Azotus, and filling the heart of the home-bound convert with new and radiant joy. As Philip passed through the lonely waste cheering reflections kept his mind company. He had been instrumental in sending a soul on the heavenward track, and he recollected the saying of Daniel, "They who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." The prospects of his journey had been hard and barren, yet he had plucked a flower in its course that to his thoughts would be a sweet smelling savour for ever.

The line of duty in its windings and mists, in its cross roads and intersecting briars, *is always thus* yielding. The

light of Divine Providence over life's pilgrimage, is at times obscured by clouds, and the Christian in these night watches, rubs off by prayer the film of faith's eye, until it perceives that all things are working together for good. And there are full moons at intervals of his journey that throw out extraordinary rays, reveal a celestial magnetism, and bring up from the points of his compass, sparks to his eyes. Such manifestations fan the flickerings of hope and shed abroad the love of God in the heart. Even as in Sinai's wilderness, the altar fire grew not dim nor cold; so amidst desolations, is the new heart ever sustained by heaven's grace, and sent on its way through trials rejoicing.

The words the Ethiopian was reading are descriptive of one meek and lowly, and they seem to have inspired their own qualities in his heart, for though prime minister of a queen, he received with kindness and consideration the address of a stranger. The tenderest commiseration for the Martyr he was reading of, and an eager wish for comprehension of the cause and end of His pains, swayed his mind, and Philip's sudden appeal reacted relievingly on his thoughts, and brought from them the simple kindly response, "How can I except some man guide me?"

It is, we have seen, in former leaves, through a prayerful humble Holy Ghost illumed mind, that the riches of the Bible are viewed. In this beholding, is the glory of the Lord, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and the conviction that He is the Son of God. This, the Ethiopian

acknowledged before baptism. The rite would have been ineffectual without, and so with all adults. As the body without the spirit is dead, so baptism without faith is dead. Adult baptism is a confirmation of previous spiritual operations, and when these have not preceded it, is invalid and injurious. It was by baptism by immersion, that the Ethiopian confirmed his faith. That form of baptism has now generally been succeeded by the form of sprinkling. Water in baptism being only a sign, *its measure* is not of any importance, and the modern deviation from the primitive form, need not offend the consciences of the weak, and has great physical advantages.

It must be admitted, the Bible propagations of infant baptism are very indistinct, and that it is an anticipation of the precariousness of infancy, that has led to its esteem in the Christian Church. The hereafter of an infant dying unbaptized, is in no wise affected by that accident, yet are the reflections of parents sweetened by the arrest of opportunity in the person of their babe, of showing worshipful love to an institution of Christ. Hence their observance of it is a pious provision for consolation in future bereavement, and doubtless, as the beautiful sentence of the Church of England says, God alloweth their charitable work and blesses it.

Drawn to the font by the love of Christ, and giving sign of that love by earliest conformity to His ordinance, parents solemnly constitute themselves sponsors for the Christian

tion of their offspring until their age and piety perfect the rite of confirmation, which is in fact, adult without the use of water.

been seen with what happy feelings Philip to Azotus. The Ethiopian was not less happy neward path. There is a photograph of heaven sanctified believer's soul, and tidings of the world seem oftentime inflashed as by telegraph. ; and extraordinary at seasons is this celestial that he exclaims, "This is none other than the God, and this is the gate of heaven."

influences of heaven the true Christian feels and uch, of *their mode of operation* he knows little. ind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the reof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or wither so is every one that is born of the Spirit." It eant that in Holy Scripture there is any un- of the means of procuring heavenly grace. The as plainly his part of the covenant, and the surety e fulfilment. He reads plainly the processes by nctification is reached. He can tell by what path to it; but he cannot tell by what path it came to here are some things the angels desire to look into. patience we possess our soul, calmly thankful for et breezes that already blow on faith, and the streaks that already tinge the everlasting hills. These

sweet breezes and dawn-streaks, the Ethiopian felt and viewed, and he went on his way rejoicing. They fanned and raised his spirit, as the spring zephyr fans and stirs the flower. They brought, as the ancient dove to Noah, a prophecy of future rest; and in the eyes of this son of Africa, a ray like diamonds shone. He reached home at sunset. The often splendour of the great luminary's, "good night," has its spiritual analogies. Thus is the path of the just brilliant when left; yea, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for their works follow them.

A book has been written with this title: "There is a Skeleton in every House," and the author, ascending and descending into different grades of society, proves by the disclosure of some received sorrow in every family and every heart, the text of his work.

It is a prevalent idea that the procurances of wealth form a deep trench around their possessors, and shelter them as those moated castles of old time, from the access of an adversary. Poverty is supposed to be the chief harbinger of those misery spots of life that gnaw at the core of happiness as the worm at the root.

The truth however is, that as in the midst of the rarest fruit, there is a hard stone, there is often in the midst of wealth, some burden that overhangs joy like a thundercloud, or some thorn that frets the heart piecemeal, as a moth fretting a garment.

The rare plant in its crystal house, soft soil, and balmy air, often in the deep of its upturned vase, discloses the consumer of its bloom.

Dives, in his purple and fine linen, with all his sumptuous fare, has often in their thick folds, a fund of sighs living forth from his closet, the proclamation—that wealth and its concomitants cannot prevent the catechism of grief, and indemnify their commandant from ills, flesh is heir to.

The jungle ranger's night fire diverts the wild beast's howlings. The glitter of gold keeps not its fenced citizens from the pestilence that walketh in darkness ; it enters alike the hovel and the hall, and from its varied battle fields of victory, there are slain to bear away.

Naaman the Syrian, is an illustration of one wearing the armour of riches and honour over a heart a viper was daily lumbering its length around, and into its every overflow, pouring a poison.

There are trees of cancerous pith whose bark and foliage stoken mature health. Naaman the Syrian, by skill and energy in the battle field, stood before his king as the honour of his army and the redeemer of his city. But a plague-spot, as the shadow of an eclipse, darkened his contide life. *He was a leper.*

He had marched with the flourish of trumpets and awms, with banners of victory and popular acclamations to the palace, he had sat at his sovereign's right hand in the

banqueting hall; his breast-plate had been covered *with* the insignia of valour; his family had been ennobled and blessed. *But he was a leper.*

A little Hebrew maiden, a privileged captive in the house of Naaman, had won by her grace, the sympathy of his wife: the grateful child had often sighed for the mournful countenance of her mistress, and had either guessed or been told its meaning. She was heard to say, Would to God; my lord, were with the prophet of Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy. A word in season, how good is it; this earnest prayer, led ultimately, to the restoration of Naaman. Thus often has seasonable prayer from hearts of grateful love, fetched heaven's healings on some suffering conscience. The regenerate are ever instant and attuned where a soul is sick, strengthening it by the fruit of experience, and teaching it by memories of their own, how to mount up with wings like eagles. When God's love is in the heart, it shines forth apt words and deeds to the spiritually perplexed. As the angel of Paul and Silas, it travels to prison doors to set free. The true Christian cannot without interest regard a brother's soul. The first Christmas singers sang, "good will to man," and their sentences have ever mingled with redemption's tide, drawing forth from the convert's thoughts and feelings, voice and action, for another's spiritual needs. From Calvary's summit the translated one saith with the Spirit and the Bride, come. In the memories of guardian mercy

that kept him in progression from death to life, he ever raises his voice towards them who sit in darkness.

Leprosy in its form and consequences was a dreadful disease. Its degrees of virulence were marked by the colour of its spots. The white spots indicated its worst degree; and it was with these, for a lie and dishonesty, Gehazi was stricken. He went out from the presence of Elijah, a leper as *white as snow*. The fear of contagion excluded a leper from the congregation, and in loneliness and infamy he had to watch his affliction.

There is an analogy between leprosy and sin. Sin clothes the soul with spots, and strikes in, a poison, that consumes her parental image. Sin makes outcasts of its slaves; its recklessness brings them to the grasp of human laws, and in a dungeon they wear the brand of contagion with remorse. And there are other sin-slaves, whose cunning preserves them from the meshes of the law, whom society, less technical than law, has in tacit tribunal decreed the outcasts of respect and love. Yet how incomparable are the present expulsions of sin with hereafter's. The happinesses of social relationship have here their alloy; those of hereafter will be without. The regrets of exile from heaven must therefore be more deeply harrowing than those of earthly banishment, and, that in their future region, the condemned have estimate of their loss, our Lord describes Dives perceiving across the gulf, the lights of Paradise.

With letters of introduction to the King of Israel, Naaman travelled into Judæa, and, meeting with Elijah, was bidden to wash seven times in Jordan. This advice displeasing him, he turned his back on the prophet with rage.

There is some analogy in this conduct to that of the impenitent and unhumbled, whose restlessness has led them to open the New Testament. The crucifixion scene is returned from with dissatisfaction. Heaven was not visible from Mount Calvary, or any title to its inheritance there discovered.

During his homeward journey, the mind of Naaman was fully relieved to his attendants: "Behold, I thought the prophet would come out, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel; may I not wash in them and be clean?"

There is in this language, a spirit that has large fellowship in the world; a spirit, distant from the processes of conversion, opposing and exalting itself against all that is called God, and filling itself as the prodigal, with husks.

Naaman would have liked to have seen Elisha more of a magician and less a man of God. He would not have turned away in a rage if the prophet had come out in sacerdotal robes, with mysterious incantations and wand.

Truly said Isaiah of the Providence of God, "His way

are not our ways ; neither are His thoughts our thoughts." People have not yet ceased to imagine that sin is quenched, and heaven secured, through ritualism, apparel, and priestcraft, and they turn away in rage from the plain path of the cross, and the simplicity of the atonement. They want the soul's bread on a more lordly dish, and think the reception of the gospel unceremonialized, as the picking up of the crumbs only, beneath their Master's table.

The attendants of Naaman had superior views of Divine inspiration : If, my lord, they replied, the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, would'st thou not have done it ? how much more when He said unto thee, wash and be clean. Naaman listened with conviction to this counsel, and by obeying Elisha's directions, received a complete cure.

It is only when a sinner proceeds through the pure gospel, that he reaches paths of safety where God's reconciled countenance shines.

This, said our Lord, clasping the representation cup of His blood-shedding, this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins, *i.e.*, this is a token of My blood-shedding—the seal of the New Testament, which shall confirm to the faithful forgiveness of sins. Follow Me, follow My Life up to My Death, and thou shalt follow Me to Heaven.

CHAPTER VIII.

In Memoriam—The Passover—The Institution of the Lord's Supper—*The* Suicide of Judas and Ahithophel—The Memory of the Just blessed—The Countenance of Judas: his Conduct at Supper: the Reference of the Psalmist to Him—The Lord's Supper instituted only as a Memorial—The Characteristic Motives of Suicide, &c., &c.

IN MEMORIAM.

THE memory of the just is blessed. The works of good men follow them long after worms have destroyed this body. As the long lingering hues of sunset gem the twilight and the night; the example of good men remains long after they have shone in another sphere. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours and their works do follow them." It is to be observed how aptly and firmly the Prayer-book has caught up this beautiful sentiment. Every Sabbath day in the Synagogue, we affirm our belief in "the communion of saints;" and before the table of the Lord, "We bless God's Holy Name for all His servants departed this life in His faith and fear." They are as torch-lights in the midst of the church; and as the moon and stars to the traveller, mark the heavenly

pilgrim's path. We live in a favoured period of the world's history. Thousands of generations have laid the fruit of their experience and research at our feet. We feed mentally upon very different and superior food to our forefathers; they had not the retrospect that we have. Their epitaphs were few. Day unto day, in such splendid numbers, had not in their time, uttered speech, and night unto night in such accumulated grandeur, had not in their time, shewn knowledge. Each generation has, under Divine Providence, helped forward its successor in the path of religion; and looking back gratefully on the sheaves of prophesy, the legacies of the Old will, we are reminded of the Saviour's address to His apostles: "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see."

To the watcher of earliest morn, light seems to be a slow traveller. A grey streak, like the radiance of distant stars, suffuses the eastern hills. For a long time during its enlargement and variations, terrestrial objects are indistinct; but when, as from the bowels of the earth, the sun appears, the cattle and the trees, the village spire and the lea, are almost suddenly revealed, and luminous. Thus gradually, and at times almost suddenly, has knowledge, and its discoveries of life and immortality, been brought to light. The patriarchal and prophetical ages were the *grey streak* of religion's light. For a long time during its enlargement and variations, the purposes of God in the destinies of man were indistinct; but when, in the fullness of time, from

the root of Jesse, and the city of David, there arose Prophet, Priest, and King: when the Holy Ghost and power of the Highest overshadowed the blessed and women, and, through the tender mercy of God, that He One, called emphatically, THE Son of God, was born. With comparative suddenness the light of heaven flashed on, and grew, in them that sat in darkness, and hope streams more rapid and clear, pierced the shadows of darkness. Christianity became henceforth the light of the world, has grown (as its Divine Author said it would) into almost universal reception, and will continue to grow, until the last enemy shall have been destroyed, and He (the Author and Finisher) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, and shall have put down all adverse: and authority and power, for He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

We have said that the impressions of a good man's remain as the glory of the sun, long after his departure. What shall we say of that Divine Man whose advent impressions have not only remained, but are stretched in a halo round the globe; whose death has gone forth with amazing omnipotence amongst all nations, leading captive captive.

It might seem now (when God has set Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principal and power, and might, and dominion; now, when He has given Him a name above every name; and now, when

kingdoms of this world are rapidly becoming the kingdoms of His Christ,) almost unnecessary to be reminded by the sacramental bread and wine, of the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood-shedding, He hath obtained for us. Yet these benefits, through their symbols of bread and wine, partaken of with beautiful prayer of application, and hymns of thanksgiving, have (so to speak) *an individual conveyance*, and, with unusual distinctness of connection, "show forth the Lord's death."

The early history of the Israelites, and the remarkable providence of God for the re-union of Joseph with his family, is well known.

Flourishing in the smile of Pharaoh, Jacob's progeny vastly increased until the accession and grievous oppression of another monarch.

From this dreadful tyranny God gave them marvellous deliverance, and in memorial of their exodus, the Feast of the Passover was instituted. For seven days the Israelites were forbidden the use of leaven in their bread, and all manner of unnecessary work; and in convocation, referred gratefully and worshipfully to that night of rescue. It is to be remarked, that our Lord, in the introduction of better religious ordinances, ever showed respect for the old ones.

He heard and preached in the Jewish synagogue, and in His death hours, manifested great anxiety to partake of the Passover. See Him in the twilight of that upper room with the Twelve. They had sang together the song of

Moses and Miriam, and their hands in godly faith and love were clasped, yet Judas had a sullen look, and restless eye, and his hand trembled as it dipped in the dish.

There is in the lines of the human face an index of the mind; its character, by a protective law of God, seems to be photographed on the brow, and prevailing passions write in large type, their name on the forehead. A shadow in the eye often reveals the insincerity or contradiction of words, and thought, in its silence, is often by reflections, visible to another. It is well indeed, that thus by Divine Providence, the cunning, cruel, and licentious, have their prowlings unmasked, and their dangers avoided in first stage. It may be that there is also *an inward process* of engraving, and that by a law of God, the soul's manner of life is impressed for judgment. There was theft and murderous treachery in the heart of Judas, and he felt ill at ease with virtue and honesty. It is probable that for some time he had been mistrusted by the Eleven. The fund of the treasury bag had been misappropriated, and the countenance and manner of Iscariot was against him. Jesus knew thoroughly his heart and designs. He saw the trap laid for His life, and its desperate covetousness. See Him now "sorrowful yet rejoicing." Pangs of mind and body were approaching. His familiar friend and counsellor had lifted up his heel against Him. The Eleven were about to forsake and flee; and Simon, son of Jonas, to deny Him with an oath. Yet were there before Him

the accomplishments of redemption, the fruits of His glorious mission from generation to generation. He saw of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied.

Judas was a good man when ordained by Christ. He had been once enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift, and the good word of God and the powers of the world to come; he had fallen away, and was about to crucify and put to open shame, the Son of God. There are some remarkable lines in the Psalms concerning him: "Let his prayer become sin—his children be fatherless—his wife a widow. Let there be no one to have compassion on them, &c., &c.; lines which by no means must be taken to represent the feelings of Him who prayed forgiveness for His enemies. He was not a reviler of the reviling, or a threatener of them who caused Him suffering.

The words of David are in opposition to the spirit of the Christian religion, and were probably uttered against some personal adversary, during the blindness of his murder and adultery before the arrival of Nathan. They are, however, at the election of Matthias, made by St. Peter, *applicable to the punishment of Judas*: and his family, in the operation of moral and physical laws (see II. Commandment) would be made partakers.

Hebrew scholars allow a modification of the spirit of these cursings, by a translation in the future tense, *e.g.* his children *shall* be fatherless—his wife *shall* be a widow—no man *shall* have compassion on his fatherless children.

If the King of Israel, in his prophetic character, pronounced this commination in the name of God, against a certain class of sin, the Christian mind is relieved of its shudder. A prophet of God might properly declare Divine executions of general or particular sin, but might not, without prostitution of office, quote them for selfish objects.

A prophet might write down inspirations he knew not the meaning of. A vivid picture of a certain kind of crime may have been brought into David's heart, and have influenced him to pronounce sentence of warning against its malefactors; and St. Peter, perceiving its application to the acts of Judas, may have placed him under its doom.

Towards the close of their repast, after a general short-silence, Jesus rising, said, "One of you shall betray me." His words, as lightning, fell on each heart, and drew instantly the most anxious response, "Lord, is it I?" Judas had not spoken, and to hide his confusion and singularity, thrust his hand into the dish. Our Lord immediately stretched his arm also towards the dish, saying, "He that dippeth his hand with me, the same shall betray me." Judas then, in an impudent tone, said, "Master, is it I:" and after the emphasis and dignity of our Lord's affirmative, became sullen and went away.

The conduct of Judas in examination, leaves an increasing impression of presumptuous depravity. He had seen his

Master's mightiest miracles. He had heard the voice from heaven saying, this is My Beloved Son. He did not believe Jesus an impostor, but he loved gold.

In the Saviour's crucifixion prayer for his tormentors, there was a clause that Judas could not appropriate, *They know not what they do*," and in despair, he went and hanged himself.

There is a great distinction between presumptuous and unwilling sin. One is proceeded to, against the oft-repeated voice of conscience, the other is committed before that voice is heard.

Judas, having left the room, our Lord proceeded to appoint a memorial of His death. He brake bread with blessing, and delivered a piece to each of the apostles. He then took the wine-cup, and with blessing, bade all drink of it in remembrance of His blood-shedding.

It is well known what strange notions have been propagated concerning this most simple ordinance. It is easy for selfish purposes to misunderstand any expression. And our Lord's on this occasion have thus wilfully been abused.

Who that brings common sense and an honest understanding to this Passover scene, will declare that Jesus meant to establish the doctrine of Transubstantiation?

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a reminiscence, and reminiscence only, of the exceeding great love of our Master in dying for us. Love to Christ and one another

filled the hearts of its first observers. Thus ought righteousness and peace ever to meet in this holy communion, and in the hearts and minds of participators, show worthily the Lord's death till He come.

There are two remarkable cases of suicide in association with the offspring of David. There were civil wars during that monarch's reign. His house was divided against itself. Absalom had infected with rebellion a number of his father's subjects, and in the prosecution of his designs, had placed at his right hand in intimacy of counsel, a man more wicked than himself.

The pride of Ahithophel's heart had much swollen with this leaven of princely deference, and the shock of its downfall, threw his mind into disorder and despair. When it became evident his influence had ceased, "he saddled his ass and arose, and gat him to his house to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died."

Many centuries after this, there was born into the world, a Prince and Saviour of the house and lineage of David—a Reconciler of men to His Father—who, for the accomplishment of His glorious ministry, selected a familiar friend. Prostrating the high honour of discipleship, Judas embezzled the monies of the treasury-bag, and covenanted with the ecclesiastical authorities, to betray his Lord and Master.

When he had fulfilled his contract, and the fevers of avarice had burnt down to remorse, he went in shame and despair and hanged himself.

There are distinct and differing features in these Bible instances of self-destruction. The motive of Ahithophel was pride, the motive of Judas was conscience of guilt. The instigation of motive in Ahithophel, was the conduct of another; the instigation of motive in Judas was his own conduct.

These two motives, though in the abstract, diverse, are often by circumstances, brought into connection, and by a constrained union produce suicide.

Consciousness of guilt would have no power to strike even a thought of such a tragedy, in many minds that would instantly embrace and resolve it when their guilt was made public; but though in combination, these motives have a giant strength, they are found in separation, sufficiently impulsive of suicide.

There is a delusive notion in some men's thoughts that, in a degree, this act is an expiating one; that it will wash out some of the stains of the spirit. And there is a conceit in the motions of pride, in posthumous calculation, that much admiration will follow the memory of such pluck and inflexibility.

These apprehensions are assistances to such singular motives as Judas's and Ahithophel's, and it is probable

they were entwined with theirs. But there are other prompters to this sad deed than pride and conscience. Habits of intemperance and impurity propagate a restlessness and irregularity of that trellis-work of the mind—the nervous system, and incapacitate it for grappling with, and ejecting calamity, from its folds. The arrow of grief that an unimpaired constitution would have strength to withdraw, sinks deeper and deeper amidst these habit-created imbecilities; and in the sullenness or frantiness of despair, the patient siezes delusively the knife or the rope, to rid himself of that which ill-used nature, and uninvited Divine grace, will not.

The crime of suicide is great and awful. It is a sacrilege. God is the leaseholder of the spirits of all flesh, and only at His will are the temple walls of the soul to be broken down. The self-destroyer, is therefore the worst class of thief, as well as the most hopeless kind of murderer. He robs his Maker, and by an iniquitous act of violence, that he has not a moment to repent of, transplants his own soul.

CHAPTER IX.

An Historical Influence in Death—Retribution—The Prophet's Review of his life and its present effects—His appearance at the Transfiguration—His likeness to Christ—His sepulchre.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

THERE is an historical influence in death. The death of a man seems to bring up for discussion the important events of his life. The dial of his existence seems to move many degrees backward, and forces the eye of survivors upon many of his old footprints. It is remarkable also, that in the patient himself, there has generally been a similar operation. The deeds done in the body seem in the hour of death, to arise in awful procession for a last audit. The book of life is opened, and the Spirit makes its reckonings with God. It is the testimony of many in the presence of death, that the annals of even infancy were being disclosed, and that in the largest type, the small and great experiences of life were being seen. The inferences and anticipations from these termination scenes are solemn. There are dark recesses in each memory, where the thoughts rarely search. The bars of their gates are wished to be made fast for ever. They are full of sighs and moans, and the breath catches at their threshold. Sometimes in a dream they are visited,

and how sorrowful is the awaking. Sometimes at midnight, when the nerves are restless, there darts from these dark vaults as a meteor from the firmament of night, a remembrance that moistens every pore, and that reasons of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. Evil deeds pass not away so swiftly as is generally supposed; there is a faithful registrar within of even every idle word. Our selfishnesses, our unkindnesses, our meannesses, our dishonesties, our lusts, our injustices, our uncharitablenesses, will return retributively as surely as the ebbing tide and the setting sun. Such is the providence of God's moral government, that the smallest transgression leaves its mark; a mark, that at some period of the future will stare the soul in the face, and declare as the ancient handwriting on the wall, "Thou art weighed in the balances."

These are fearful prospects if there were no means of remedy; yet with the utmost use of these means *the mark remains*; but it remains with no more power of pain, than the scars of some long recovered from disease. *The truly penitent and amended, have not their errings and strayings rooted out of memory.* The soul in her reflections still discerns where evil weeds once grew, *but their poison juice is dried up; they have lost their force of grasp*, and she regards them thankfully and securely. There has come from the testament of Christ a remedial breeze.

There were some acts of Moses, that in his solemn steps

Mount Nebo, would thus come without a pang in view. He had once committed manslaughter; he had recklessly given way to passion at the foot of Sinai, and been offensively vain glorious by the waters of Meribah; not one of these reflections would make his path to the grave, a trembling one. They would divide as the currents of the Red Sea at the lifting up of his sceptre, had divided, and let him pass unoverwhelmed to his God. He had before ascended another mount to meet God, but he came down from that after a few days. It was many centuries after his ascent of Mount Nebo that he *descended*, and when it was not to meet an idolatrous people; it was to meet on the Mount of Transfiguration the Mediator of the new Covenant, and the Apostles of a new dispensation. There are some remarkable significations from that glorious re-appearance of Moses; he had left his body ages ago on the peaks of Abarim. He is seen splendidly reappareled, and clearly distinguished; there appeared (says St. Mark) the amazed disciples, Moses and Elias, and they were talking with Jesus. The grave does not leave the servants of God destitute of clothing, nor does it destroy their cognizable features; "we know that when their earthly house is dissolved they have a building of God." We know that when they are unclothed, they are clothed upon, and that mortality is swallowed up in life. We know that the deceased, after death's transfigurations, are with Moses, Elias, and Jesus, and that in their new and beautiful

garments there are such tracings of past association, as to render specially blissful the Communion of Saints.

There is not in all Sacred History a page so full of sublimity as that which records the Death of Moses. It was not an ordinary mode of departure from the world. An hundred and twenty years had not bent his back ; his eye was undimmed, and his natural force unabated. "Come up," said the word of the Lord unto him, "Come up into this mountain and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession, and die in the mount whither thou goest up."

Behold him lifting up the hands of farewell benediction over the camp of Israel. The sun is in the West ; it is a glorious eve. Mount Nebo wears a purple crown. The prophet retires from the midst of the congregation and ascends the steep unseen. There are sons of God awaiting him on its summit. Before twilight he will be in the immediate presence of Jehovah. What profound sensation sways the hosts of Israel, as darkness and he, return not together. With what tearful prayers the elders surround his vacant chair in the tabernacle. Companies of searchers go forth in vain. Sackcloth covers the camp for thirty days, and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. Hands not human, gently changed the Patriarch's robes, and cherubim and seraphim left the mercy-seat, to conduct him through the veil, to a sphere holier than the "holy of

olies." Hearken unto him, as divine influences increase in his path, renew the rapturous prayer of Sinai, I beseech thee shew me thy glory. This time it is more fully responded to. A change is about to take place in him, that will enable him to see the face of God and live.

We cannot thus bid adieu to this great and good man, without expression of gratitude as well as admiration. From him we have such accounts of creation, and the origin of evil, as no other inspired writer gives ; accounts that are so beautifully simplified, and rendered in figure so plain, that all can understand ; accounts that geologists and antiquarians have dug out confirmations of, from the bowels of the earth.

As a type of our blessed Saviour, the memory of Moses will be ever dear to the Christian Church. He was the Captain of Israel's salvation from slavery, and he brought them through a great and terrible wilderness, to within sight of a goodly land. Jesus has done the same and more for His people. He has rescued them by the power of His life and death from the slavery of ignorance, folly, and sin. He has made a track for them through the world to heaven. He has called down from above, refreshments and protection by the way, and thanks be to God, *we know of His sepulchre*. Arimathæa is not hid *from us*. The floods have lift up their waves, the floods have lift up their

waves, Jordan is driven back. There is not a finer epitaph for a tombstone than that single word—Arimathæa. It is the watch-word of immortality. It is the banner of victory over death and the grave. It is the lantern of the sick room. It is the crown of faith, and the staff of breaking hearts. Arimathæa and Bethany are *our* Mount Nebo. We can see from the garden of Joseph, and the old grave of Lazarus, a strong departure light that will keep all through the night. We will not search in mourning for *our* Captain, as Israel sought for *their's*. We will not let our hearts be troubled. He has gone to prepare a place for us.

And—

“The Spirit shall return to Him
Who gave its fire the spark,
But think not—Sun—it shall be dim
When thou thyself art dark.
No ; it shall live again and shine
To bliss unknown to beams of thine,
By him recalled to breath,
Who captive led captivity,
And took the sting from Death.”

CHAPTER X.

**The city of Nineveh—The Word of the Lord, and Jonah's dealing with it—
The Storm—Its influence on the Mariners and Jonah—Jonah's second
Mission—Its consequence and applications.**

THE NARRATIVE OF JONAH.

THE narrative of Jonah has in it many seasonable teachings. It is illustrative of the judgment and mercy of God, and the rebelliousness and selfishness of man.

The city of Nineveh containing sixty thousand people was filled up the measure of its iniquity; it has become a sink of vile affections. Unrighteousness, fornication, covetousness, envy, murder, deceit, malignity go not out of its streets.

The Spirit of God will no longer strive. As it was in the days of Noah, He sends a preacher of warning. "The Word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness is come up before me." It seems that Jonah did not relish the mission; it was neither

pleasant nor safe, or likely in its ultimate issues, to bring him fame. Other prophets had under similar circumstances perished, and it was almost certain the Ninevites would retaliate. He leaves his home discontented and reproachful, impressed with the necessity of executing the divine command, yet fretted with desire and invention to shirk it. It is with slow footsteps and downcast countenance he approaches the coast; and here ensues a conflict fierce and long. Jonah's conscience preremptorily bids him turn towards Nineveh. His heart all the while rebellious, presents images of torture and death, and advocates desertion. Night is coming on, and miserable forebodings accompany his pacings on the lonely strand. Bewildered, depressed, fatigued, (as a drowning man catcheth at a straw,) he enters the first outward-bound bark, not caring to inquire its destination. Sleep, that angel of comfort, even to the sinner, delivers him temporarily from his distress. The cliffs are out of sight, and a dark cloud before the moon prophecies a storm. The wind, by short angry gusts presages its increasing power. The obedient ocean heaves, and its waves are already fringed with foam. Higher and higher swells the dark billow, whilst its crest, like the head of a hissing serpent, darts its spray on the pilot. The timbers of the vessel creak and strain. Alarm has begun to knit the hardy features of the crew. Death is in front of them, and desolation behind. (All that a man hath will he give for his life; and there are some on land, that even these

rude hearts, in such a moment, feel as dear as life.) By a marvellous instinct they are next stirred; "the hurricane has not come by chance, heaven requires some propitiation." Every man cries unto his god, and they cast forth the wares that are in the ship to lighten it. Still there is no sign of security, no answer to their tears and groans. "They have not used the right spell, the gods require some greater sacrifice than the wares of the ship." Their eyes turn towards the sleeper in the cabin; they know by his own telling he is a fugitive. They suspect him to be the evil leaven of the gale, yet they have a sense of justice, and they will not cast him out indiscriminately; they are willing to share the risk of lots. Each one thrusts his rough shaking hand into the bag. There is death in the pot; but better had one die, than all. By a remarkable providence and justice, Jonah draws the fatal die, and even now they hesitate to destroy him. They stop to reason with him, but he, conscience-stricken and heart-sick, urges the fulfilment of his lot. Still they refrain, and applying with renewed vigour to their oars, steer for the land. All their efforts are, however, in vain. ("The sea wrought and was tempestuous against them.") There can be no more admission of delay, and calling God to witness the necessity and justice of the act, they plunge their convict into the raging surf, and the storm abates. By the special providence and protection of God, the Prophet survives, and in the second chapter of his history, we have his most beautiful and eloquent song of thanksgiving for deliverance.

There are some features in this portion of the narrative profitable for comment. First, we see the action of an insubordinate will, and its consequences. It is not stated in what way the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah. There was evidently in those early times some mark by which a true prophet was known, and it will be remembered that when Saul shewed his token of right of admission into the company of prophets, it occasioned much surprise and criticism. *Is Saul among the Prophets?*—

The holy men who were thus the recipients of divine communication, would we may suppose, be always able to distinguish between the independent movements of their own mind, and those produced by inspiration of God. There would, it is certain, be the power of infallible distinction between a divine impression and a human. Jonah had no doubt whatever that it was the divine will that he should go and denounce Nineveh. There is not now that *degree* and *kind* of divine inspiration which there was in olden times, nor is it so much needed. The New Testament is as the noonday sun to inquirers for the will of God. Instinct, conscience, the development of things created, the fruits of scientific research, may, and do give us, hints of the mind and will of God; but the New Testament is the safest, the simplest, and the most distinct of all its exponents. We are like Jonah, *in no doubt as to the will of God*. We know by the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ which way He would have us go, and what He would have us do. Through

he divine mercy, Jonah having been rescued from death, is again trusted as a missionary. The Word of the Lord came unto him the second time, saying, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Within three days his voice is heard in the suburbs and in the market-place. The arm of the Lord is revealed. 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed.' The king in his palace bows down in humiliation and penitence before the King of kings and Lord of lords, and all his people bend and mourn and worship. Their heavenly Father proclaims himself, as on Mount Sinai, merciful and gracious and slow to anger. His decree is reversed. The city with its sixty thousand people is to be spared, and if, as we are told on divine authority, the angels of heaven rejoice over *one* sinner that repenteth, there must have been above, music strains, as strong and sweet as those Christmas one's of Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards man." But see how differently these good tidings of great joy are received by Jonah. Displeased and angry and sullen, he retires without the camp; not like *one in aftertime, willing to die that millions might be saved*; but selfishly murmuring that God had esteemed the interests of sixty thousand people, more important than his prophetic fame. He lingers in the neighbourhood, half hopeful that God would yet destroy the city.

In a beautiful, affecting, and kind way, God revealed to him the unregenerate state of his heart. The heat of an

oriental sun came down afflictingly upon him in his daylight saunterings and surly musings. A large gourd is caused to spring up in front of his tent, and he welcomes its cool and refreshing shades. The next morning it is dried up and withered ; a worm has been feasting all night on its pith. He becomes peevish and fretful, and prays for death. God answers him by a keen and cutting comparison. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow ; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are six score thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left."

CHAPTER XI.

**God's Revelations through Dreams—The Providence of God and its Teachings
—Our Saviour's indirect reference to this Dream, and its figurative intimation.**

JACOB'S DREAM.

AMONGST the mysteries of this life, Dreams have a place. Sleep is the suspension of the direct action of the senses, and it seems as if the soul was then peculiarly influenced by their collection, and most active in its appropriation.

In departure from the body, the immortal, bears away all memories, as the bee at eventide the honey of wayside flowers; and it is remarkable in the hour of death, how the impressions of childhood are re-expressed.

In olden time it often pleased God to impart during sleep, His will to man. The safety of the young child Jesus, was provided for by an inspired dream. The conveyance of the New Testament to the Gentiles was through the impulse of a dream; and St. John in a dream, beheld the glories of hereafter.

It is not marvellous that God should choose the season of sleep for His near approaches to man. Before His immediate presence even the angels veil their faces, and sleep is

a veil. The human spirit seems to have more innocence during sleep, and to be less in the power of the flesh.

When God came to Balaam, the prophet was in the shadows of sleep ; and it was in their first guilty sleep, His retributive voice reached Adam and Eve.

Divine revelation through dreams has long almost ceased ; also the visible ministry of angels: they are not now met at the tent door, nor their voice heard at evening oblation. They greet not now the bereaved at the gate of the sepulchre, and bear not the cup of strengthening to the lonely weeper. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son ;" and the impressions of that Advent, are strong and guiding enough, without further vision and revelations.

The special Providence of God in the history of good men, is interesting and cheerful to contemplate. When the pathway of their minds has been starless, when they have been exceeding sorrowful even unto death, He has given His angels charge concerning them. He sent one, and His own still small voice, to famishing Elijah ; and when Jacob was an exile and homeless, He gave him a remarkable token for good.

It must have been with heavy heart, that in the thicken—

ing twilight Jacob leaned on his stone pillow. Home and parental love came forth from his memories, with heave and sigh. He watched the moon and stars, and grew more trustful, and when his eyelids closed, he beheld a ladder set up on the earth and reaching unto the heavens, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.

It was by a thorny path that Jacob was thus led to realize the protection of God, and yet in many after scenes of life, the fruits of the wilderness sweetened his reflections.

The children of God are brought nearer heaven by afflictions, and into the clearer knowledge of their own hearts.

Our Lord's saying to Nathaniel, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man," probably had its form from Jacob's vision. Verily, His way to heaven was spangled by ascending and descending angels. They sang a new song over his birth-place; one strengthened him in the hour of death, two rolled away the stone from the door of his sepulchre, and two addressed the men of Gallilee as he went up from Bethany.

The Advent of the Redeemer was, as it were, the letting down of a ladder from heaven. The world was dark when it touched. The song of Israel's seers had long been hushed, and the priests of religion had sown tares amongst God's oracles.

About His Father's business, Jesus courageously revealed the dishonour of religion and ministers, and in His teaching and example, reflected the mind of God. He was thus the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of His person, and He had a right to say to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

He shewed men by the manner of His life, how to meet death, and by His blood-shedding, sealed His testimony. A Testament (as St. Paul tells the Hebrews) is not valid without the death of the Testator. Blessed are they who refuse not Him who thus speaketh from heaven, and go in His footsteps from strength to strength.

There were many steps in Jacob's ladder, and there are in Christianity's path to heaven. St. Paul had gone long and painfully on the road when he said, "I count not myself to have apprehended." Honest penitence is the soil in which the love of Christ is rooted, and it rises by the continual digestion of his Gospel, to a level of comprehension with all saints.

There must be growth in Christianity's grace. There must be such an increasing admiration and worship of the character of Christ, that the proneness to sin and trespass is daily diminished, and His likeness in the heart daily strengthened. Beholding in the New Testament, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, *i.e.*, His noble and miraculous works, His wholesome and heavenly precepts, His perfect

ple, His peaceful and illuminating death; we are led into the same image, from glory to glory, *i.e.*, we by step are drawn within his reflections, and even as by spirit of His life and death, made like Him, and brought to

Thus is the heavenly ladder ascended, slowly, surely, a little fear, and much love, until the house of God, and gate of heaven, are arrived at. Thus is the mercy of Lord Jesus Christ developed in eternal life. Thus does He His disciples unto Himself; and it is said, He descend once more the heavenly ladder, retrace His path and enter our world as quietly as He left it. This Jesus (affirmed the angels of Bethany), who is taken from you into heaven, shall so come as ye have seen go. In every part of the earth there seems to be an exact, though rapid preparation for this visit, and perhaps a generation will not pass away until all these things are fulfilled.

CHAPTER XII.

The Influence of this Season—The Travellers to Bethlehem—The Birth of Jesus—The Angels and the Shepherds—Simeon and Anna—Applications

CHRISTMAS.

THE season of Christmas has a peculiar and powerful influence. It brings through the frost and snow, a warm and refreshing breeze to the heart, and swells and clears its currents.

The sun of Christmas morn seems in his arising to proclaim with special emphasis, "Let there be light," and strife and enmity from the lifting up of his voice seem to flee away.

The mind in its journeyings with memory is too full of love's inspirations for a sharp thought or angry wave; yet now and then falls thereout a tear, for few hearts can return to their childhood's years, save through that powerful declarer of the imperfection of all earthly love and friendship—the churchyard. Here, amidst the marks of their forced separation, are the most binding and happy ties confirmed; here, amidst the mementos of the bitterest in the sweetest counsel taken together; here, hope is filled with joy; and here also, sorrow, is not without hope: the

communion of saints is not broken by the grave ; the place of departed spirits is not far from every one of us.

And—

Shall not the mourner dry his tears
When death hath opened Hades' door ;
Shall he not recognize each one
Who with bright welcome swiftly flies,
To tell of commune here begun,
And build on it celestial ties ;
Ties that shall ne'er again the chill,
Of mortal shadows gathering know ;
Ties that unbroken joy shall fill,
And never have a fellow woe.—
In that blest city where no sigh
Or scalding tear of long farewell,
Or tolling of the minute bell,
Is heav'd or heard for those that die.

It is now more than eighteen centuries since two weary travellers entered at nightfall a city of David. There was a court of tribute sitting, and numbers of country people were in attendance. Bethlehem was full, and Joseph and Mary rested in the stable of the inn ; they ate their humble meal in the twilight, commended themselves to the God of Abraham, and shut to the door.

There is not a Bethlehemite gives these pious strangers a thought, yet all heaven, is contemplating them, the bells of the celestial city are ringing, and its harpers are harping with their harps.

It is long before Mary sleeps ; the strange visit of Gabriel

is before her. She seems to see again his bright countenance, and to cast again in her mind his manner of salutation. She thinks of her cousin Elizabeth, their mutual congratulations, and their hymns of thanksgiving. Sleep overtakes her ponderings, and when next conscious, an Infant is at her side.

A torch-light is dealing out red shadows through the gloom, and Joseph, with two or three interested neighbours, is anxiously watching her.

There had been another visitor whom Joseph knew not. The angel Gabriel had witnessed the fulfilment of His annunciation, and was now with some shepherds on the adjacent hills.

There was a general expectation of the Messiah, and these holy men had been conversing by their watch-fires, of Israel's hope. See them now silent with alarm, suddenly illuminated, and One, who has stood in the presence of God, before them. Fear not, says he, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

There were other witnesses than the shepherds to this blessed manifestation. A multitude of the heavenly host had followed the archangel, and kept vigil near him at Bethlehem, and unable longer to restrain their expressions of interest, now burst into sight with splendour, and sing-

ing, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.

There is a light in the firmament above the brightness of the sun as these morning stars sing together, and the valley echoes repeat distinctly their words.

Gabriel has bid adieu to the shepherds, and joined these sons of God in their shoutings for joy. Their voices are less audible as they ascend, and the reflection of their glory as the setting sun, gradually leaves the sky. Now only the moon and planets are visible, and the shepherds arising from their knees, leave their flocks to the dawn.

Faith, love, gratitude, and adoration, shine in and fill their hearts, and their rough features more prominent with eagerness and worship, are as veins of light when they enter the manger. See how on bent knee these hardy mountaineers, let fall their tears on the swaddling clothes of the Babe, and afterwards in their calmer moments, whisper into Mary's ear the things they had heard and seen.

The good and marvellous news is quickly in circulation, and the shepherds return to their folds glorifying and praising God. How many prophets and kings had desired to look on Him, on whom they had looked. The bones of the prophets had long crumbled in their sepulchres. The word of the Lord was precious in these days. For centuries the voice of Divine inspiration had been almost silent, yet there was one, to whose old age it had

spoken with promise: "There was a man at Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him, and it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ."

See now this venerable man enter the temple leaning on his staff. He feels himself fast growing weaker, and the time of his departure at hand, yet his faith fails not, he knows in whom he has believed, and is fully persuaded his grave will not open, until he has seen the Lord. He has come to pour out his hopeful faith in the sanctuary of God, and he finds the altar occupied. In conformity to the law of Moses, Mary has brought her infant to the service of dedication, and whilst in solemn and earnest response she is presenting him to God, Simeon by sudden inspiration, recognises His rank. His whole frame feels lifted up with supernatural strength, and with an almost youthful energy, he clasps the child in his arms, saying, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

It is remarkable that in Simeon's benediction of this Holy Family, there is a foreshadowing of the crucifixion.

Yea, says he, turning to Mary, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also. Truly, when she saw her Son bearing his cross ; when she saw Him lifted up and nailed to it ; when she saw Him surrounded by bloodthirsty and vindictive men ; when she saw his awful agonies of mind and body, and heard Him cry, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me ; a spear pierced her soul, and a thorn tore her heart. But she did not understand Simeon's remark at the time, and it was well, for she had enough to bear, without anticipation.

It seems that another aged person partook of Simeon's joy in the temple ; a prayerful woman of the name of Anna, a prophetess, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Twelve years after these joyful congratulations, the Holy Family again visit the temple at Jerusalem, and Jesus gives marked signs of His extraordinary character and mission.

Amidst the numerous greetings of kinsfolk and acquaintance, He glides away from His mother's side, and enters into astonishing conversation and argument with the most learned men of the day.

With trembling anxiety Mary long seeks Him, and to her affectionate chidings on discovery, He replies with evident manifestation of Divine authority, Wist ye not I must be about My Father's business. He accompanies His

parents home, and for eighteen years there is no distinct record of the Saviour of the world.

The preparations for His public ministry during this period, we may infer, were most hallowed. This visit to Jerusalem *was not the last occasion* Mary sought Him sorrowing. She had often a more *than three days' trial* and accounting of His absence; and in one or more instances, He openly alluded to these departures. "What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before."

These and other scenes of the childhood life of Christ are strong and vivid in the Christian heart at this sweet season of recollection and family re-union.

The wise men of the east travelled far to where the young child was. Our thoughts bear them company, and like them, we worship and give. We say on our knees, Thine, oh Lord, is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory; and we remember practically His powerful commendation of the hungry and naked, "Inasmuch as ye have given to these My brethren, ye have given to me." And whilst at this season, the rich remember the poor; the poor remember with faith and love and gratitude and hope, their ancient Companion, their fellow Endurer, their great Sympathizer, their loving Bequeather. And let both rich and poor be inspired with the first Christmas Hallelujah of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth

peace, goodwill to men." And ye bereaved and sorrowful ones, to whom this memorial season naturally brings sad comparisons, fill ye the vacant chair, and the circle gap, with the promises of Christ. "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep." They that have lived and believed in Christ never die. You see how the snow now clothes the churchyard with white apparel; Christ hath thus clothed your now missed ones, and there is waiting for *you*, similar garments to wear alongside them for ever and ever. Behold I bring you all; poor and rich, bereaved and sorrowful, good tidings. It is the birth-time of our Lord. Let His Bethlehem hymn flash its holy fire on the altar of your hearts, and send its incense through your lips. And come ye revivalists of its ancient concert, and take the angelic text from door to door.

Blessed Saviour, is Thy Birth-morn in so many sunsets lost?
Is the Anthem *now* unneeded sung by the angelic host?
Sung in happiness of prospect, Thy redeemed now enjoy.
Sung whene'er returning sinner, climbs Thy crucifixion hill.
Cot or palace, ever welcome breaks the light of Christmas Day;
Light whose errand strikes the lyre, of ten million hearts to praise;
Light that ere its longed arrival, hath been nursed by many prayers;
Light that in its sweet unfoldings, seems to banish earthly cares.

CHAPTER XIII.

He hath done all things well—The bodily Relief our Saviour gave—How we can and are to deal with Poverty and Sickness—He shall change this vile Body.

EPHPHATHA.

TRULY, said the Lord in prayer to His heavenly Father, "I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do." From His catechism of the doctors in the Temple, to that sad hour of earthquake and darkness in which He gave up the ghost, all His words and acts validate the saying of Decapolis, "He hath done all things well."

This was spoken by the people who had witnessed Him heal a stammering and deaf person.

The manner of our Lord's proceedings in this case was remarkable. "He took him aside from the multitude and put his fingers into his ears, and He spit and touched His tongue, and looking up to heaven, He sighed and saith unto the man, Ephphatha, *i.e.* be opened."

It was probably in gracious consideration for the state of the patient, that our Lord took him aside and anointed his eyes, &c. Stammerers are generally highly nervous, and he

be calmer away from the throng, and these preparations would modify the suddenness of restoration, and not a too-strong reaction on the nerves.

is remarkable also in other of the Saviour's miracles, preparations which could not in any way help His ; were made, or ordered to be made: *e.g.*, in the case of Lazarus from the dead, the tomb-stone was first removed. And another *blind* man was bidden to wash in the pool.

The Decapolonians grounded their eulogy of the Lord on His doings for the *bodies* of men ; and truly these are not to be undervalued among the benefits of His earthly ministry. We repeat the ancient saying, " He hath done things well." He hath made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. He hath broken the bonds of the paralytic, quenched the fires of fever, brought the light to blindness, quickened the pulse of the withered, straightened the cripple, healed the leper's skin, and rescued the shipwrecked. They seem much amidst the *physical* sufferings of mankind to miss the Saviour. How earnestly the loving disciple, minister of sick beds, longs for his Master's power of healing. In how many cases can his out-stretched hands afford only bring slight relief, and there remains only a point to point beyond the last convulsion, to where there is neither sorrow nor crying nor any more pain. Yet their

limited powers, should not discourage or diminish the number of Christ's followers amongst the sick and dying, and in every parish, missionary companies of this kind should be formed.

The spectacles, in the ill-ventilated, drained, and crowded alleys of our large cities and towns, demand the sympathy and help of every sincere Christian. Disease, and extreme poverty in combination, here produce scenes that would shake the hardest heart; and a small social comfort introduced, destroys the suspicion of cant that a kind word of religion so often meets with; and attracts the sufferer by its augur of sincerity, to the pondering and hopes of immortality. Our Lord not only said to the sick of the palsy, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," but, "Take up thy bed and walk."

It is however, in respect of what the Saviour has done for the souls of men, that with double emphasis, we repeat the ancient testimony, "He hath done all things well."

There is in our constitution an immortal spirit, and to gain the world and lose it, we had better never have been born.

We cannot now say, God is hard and unjust, reaping where he hath not sown. There are certainly in the Bible some terrible warnings to the knowingly and desperately wicked, but the way of salvation is plain. The New Testament is at hand. A man to have an eternal position in the

kingdom of heaven, must be led by its power, must acknowledge and embrace the divinity, life, and death, of Jesus Christ, with such earnest affection, that his life, is a reflection of His life, that his sins, are crucified with Him, and their old stains by practical faith in His atonement, blotted out.

On such acknowledgment and embrace of Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit of God shines like the sun, sweeps evil temptation from the Pilgrim's path, and presents him at last, faultless before the presence of his Father's glory with exceeding joy.

There is life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel, and the redeemed soul in beautiful garments, a glorious body like His, with swelling, flashing, stretching intellectual powers, with swiftness of locomotion, and sublime ministration, saith, "He hath done all things well." It is this fullness of redemption, that in anticipation, rebukes, the discontent of bodily sickness and death. The deaf and dumb, the spasmodic and feverous, are not *now* by Jesus freed from their infirmities, but *they will be*. He shall change their vile bodies, according to the mighty working, whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Lent—Arimathæa—Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Built upon Sand.
The Chariots of God.

LENT.

THE earliest histories of religion shew that the great events of her path were jealously guarded from oblivion. The institution of the Sabbath includes more than the idea of man's spiritual and physical refreshment. It has an everlasting reference to and remembrance of the Creation of the World.

The Exodus of the Israelites was marked by the feast of the Passover. The passage of the Jordan by a Pyramid, and Altar, and the dedication of Solomon's temple proclaimed it a memorial sanctuary of all the solemn feasts of the Lord.

The great events of religion in its sublime associateship with the Lord Jesus, have been likewise protected from oblivion, not only by the special gracious providence of God, in sheltering through perilous ages the Records of

Christianity, but by annual commemorations regularly kept up by the Church through evil report and good report ; in prosperity and in adversity : thus hath the festival of Christmas continually reminded mankind of their Great Redeemer ; the festival of Easter, of His resurrection ; and the season of Lent, of his retirement and death. The retirement, meditation, and self-examination, which the voice of Lent exhorts to, is most suitable and preparatory for the solemn reflections of Good Friday, a day which more vividly than all others should remind of The Crucifixion. It is not in an instant, that the mind can be extracted from its secularities. Experience teaches that the highest enjoyments of devotion have been slowly progressive. Prayer and praise seem to *grow* during *their exercise*, and both public and private worship, (to have concentration of thought and the ardour of affection) must be preceded by serious and lonely meditation. Thus the influences of Lent, if properly accepted, conduce to the highest spiritual enjoyment of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

There remains even now a faint notion that abstinence from food is necessary to the full recognition of Lent. No preacher would be justified in an attempt to destroy this idea, because its origin is clearly traceable to our Lord's fasting in the wilderness ; and if it could be shewn, that this feature of His solitude was specially intended for a pattern of exhortation to copy it would be a minister's duty ; but it,

seems more probable, that the Saviour's afflictions and trials in the desert, were in some mysterious way preparatory for His public ministry, and a necessary part of that grand scheme of redemption, which the mercy of Almighty God had devised. If however, in the variety of human constitution and disposition, there are natures rendered more controllable, chastened and purified, by deprivations in eating and drinking; let them be rather encouraged than ridiculed for the adoption of hard means to a good end; let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. One believeth that he may, during this season, eat all things; another who is weak eateth herbs: let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not, despise him that eateth; one man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike. I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. In the case however, of those persons who are habitual gluttons, and excessive wine-bibbers, this licence has no application. It is the duty of such immediately to begin a course of comparative fasting, and to continue that course, not only during Lent, but the whole year.

ARIMATHÆA.

THE resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the chief corner stone of Christianity. It is the interpreter of the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." It is the sweet spice of embalmment that maketh blessed the dead, and the parent of that hope, which straightens the feeble knees of the mourner. It is a voice from heaven that breaks the silence of every sepulchre, and seems ready to be swollen into chorus of praise and triumph. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory—"Oh death, where is thy sting?" The importance of this grand event the Lord Jesus himself has taught. To the oft-wavering faith of His disciples He foretold it as an everlasting sign

of His divine mission, and it is remarkable that one of these prophecies was made the means of His condemnation. It is well known that the subornation of the Sanhedrim, through the manifest contradictions in the witness-box, and which proved unsuccessful, and that not until long session, and even the shadow of a verdict obtained. The bench were about to retire in disappointment when the two traitors affirmed that He had threatened to destroy and build the temple in three days. It is also well known, that at an early hour of the Crucifixion, revilers passed by wagging their heads, saying, "Thou that destroyest the temple and rebuilddest it in three days, save thyself."

The greatest commentator on Christianity, St. Paul, lays vital stress on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and adds some infallible proofs.—“ If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain.” “ He was seen of him, who, in the hour of extremity, had thrice denied Him ; of the eleven in a vale of Galilee ; of a congregation of five hundred ; of His relative St. James ; and in the heavens, by the young man Saul. He was seen and recognized by two pious travellers to Emmaus ; by the purified Mary Magdalene ; by the rationalist Thomas, and he eat a breakfast with some fishermen of Tiberias.”

The previous sayings of our Lord respecting the Third Day, had gone abroad, and were remembered at His burial. A huge stone filled the cave's mouth, and sixty soldiers lined the adjacent groves. The defiant arm of man was however soon palsied, and the seal of the tomb broken. In the twilight of the first day an angel from heaven arrived, and rolled away as it were with a breath, the great stone.

Surely in this accumulation of evidence there is a strong foundation for faith, a deep engraving for the first Easter greeting—“ The Lord is risen indeed ;” and an everlasting re-echo of the voice of Patmos.—“ I am He who liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death,” as a key-note of junction with the old hymn of triumph,—“ Now is Christ risen from the

dead, and become the first-fruits of them that sleep." And mark what a link of consolation this conviction and association fashions, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we believe also that all who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." In the same raiment as the white shining one who turned the key of the Lord's sepulchre, will they proceed out of heaven, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER SUNDAY.

IT is well for us at no period of life's pilgrimage to lose sight of the Cross and its achievements; yet in these times, the glory of the Lord seems in a special manner to shine round about us. It bringeth us not fear, but glad tidings. For us has died, and risen, and ascended, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. These days are a sign unto us of reconciliation and life and happiness everlasting. They are the pillars the Church has erected in remembrance of His passage of "The Jordan." Let us then go up to the mount and see the Promised Land; it floweth with milk and honey; it has no night, and bitter herbs tangle not its soil. Its inhabitants have white and glistening raiment, so as no fuller on earth can whiten; and the tree of life spreads its arms over a multitude no man can number.

BUILT UPON SAND.

THERE is in the writings of one of the prophets a sentence that should go with electric speed and keenness to the mind of every unlawful money-reaper, "As the partridge sitteth upon eggs and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."

Wealth must be sound at the root, or it will like Jonah's gourd, wither in a night. There is longer and more genuine joy in the honest workman's hard-earned pound, than in the gambler's light-won thousand. The moral government of God is of such exquisite construction and span, that no Achan can long keep his Babylonish garment. The slanderous covetousness of Ahab was not in God's eyes a valid title to Naboth's property. Belshazzar had not drained his golden cup when "The Handwriting" appeared, and the leprous hand of Gehazi was not permitted to disburse the talents of Naaman.

The most hateful form of covetousness is (so to speak) the sacerdotal one ; and of this we have a striking example in the sons of Eli, whose rapacity the sacred historian declares, made men abhor the offerings of the Lord.

THE CHARIOTS OF GOD.

NUMEROUS are the vehicles by which God graciously manifests himself to mankind. The gentle flowers that drink of the brook by the way, and listen day and night to its plaintive song, the heather which the wild bee caresses on the mountains, the sparrow that sitteth alone on the house-top, and the mighty eagle that fans the clouds with his pinions, the little fly that ascends the lattice and thrills his wings in the beams of the morning, the lion that at night-fall breaks from the southern forest roaring after his prey, the glow-worm that spangles the hedgerows and sips in the twilight the dew of heaven, the Evening star (the glory of all the planets) that crowns the weary traveller, and whose circuit is as a buckler round about the mariner; are all the chariots of God. The existence, the powers, the wisdom and goodness of God; vale and hill, plain and forest, ocean and firmament, unanimously by their products declare, and ever to the mind of the infidel and doubting man, seem saying, "Be ye sure the Lord is God." Man himself is a chariot of God. "Know ye not," saith St. Paul, "that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost, and *that God dwelleth in you.*" The soul is in a special and direct sense the offspring of God. Form beauty and intellect have their parental resemblances, and have other confirmations of relationship than the parish register. And there is

another quality in the constitution of man, which confirms its own descent. It is the *inward man*, the spirit of reflection and thought, the spirit of conscience and admonition, the spirit of immortality, that hath mysteriously by an immediate act of God been lodged, and lighteth every man who cometh into the world. This vice-gerent of God, the soul, is ever contradicting "the tush" of the tongue of blasphemy, forbidding it to say, "There is no God." But there is another and particular sense in which man is a chariot of God; in addition to the soul, God imparts to a chosen few an extraordinary portion of His mind ("one star excelleth another star in glory"); from far outside and above the accomplishments of education and the reach of human sagacity, the declarations and interpretations of Divine Providence in the past and future, are engraven on the mind of the prophet.—Declarations, which proceed from their first earthly repose as the dove from the ark, to find a rest where they can. They are henceforth the guest of every willing, humble, penitent, faithful heart, and are as scaffolding to help the applying soul to climb to heaven. And there are other chariots of God of a higher order than the prophetic; there have been beings of surpassing beauty and ability, bearers or executors of God's benevolence to man. The most authoritative and intelligent explanation of The Incarnation of "the only-begotten Son of God," is from an angel; and from two appearing at Bethany we have a clear description of his return to earth; and from a multi-

of them we have Christmas words that will never die, cry to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-to man."

THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

AT are the mysteries of Creation, and often in the emulative mind is that feeling of marvel which mystifies. We see on every side wonderfully formed creatures varying habits and powers, and we can tell their home and origin. The vermillion-winged insect on the flower excites and can gratify more than a passing admiration; charms both the eye and the mind, and the mind longer than the eye. Even our breathing has alarmed it, and it is startled; but not from the thoughts.—They are going back from flower to flower to the corner where it once sheltered another form. It had a different shape there, less beautiful in its ornament, and it seemed not to move: it was in the sleep of infancy, and seemed clothed "in fine linen purple." Since its first resting there, a silken web, like as the frozen dew, and a shell as of tortoise, had protected it from the wind, and given warmth to its transactions. It was *not its first sleep*.—Before the leaf that had presented it to the sun was born, and long before

it swung in its hammock, it had reposed in another crevice and another form, and its vermillion wings are the garments of "a second resurrection."

In this and other retracings of animal and vegetable life there is little difficulty of passage; it is easy by past observations to return from the fly to the chrysalis, and from the chrysalis to the egg. This is a process a million witnesses from the nursery could prove. It has been seen in operation by ten thousand eyes, and it is a fact.

The mystery of Creation is not in the question, what are the *steps* of existence and form, but how are the *steps taken*. We know what things created are, and by what changes they have arrived at maturity, but *this is not the end of the valley*. There is an extension of path shaded from the sun, and mystery begins.

The mind moves into it slowly and reverentially, and the only name it hears is *God*. How, it asks wistfully, can these things be?

There is but one interpretation in these regions. The answer is, *God*. "God over all, blessed for evermore." It is well for the mind to go up frequently hither, to pass from the insect to the Creator, and to pass by continual exercise, swiftly, *but let it beware when to stop*. "Thou canst not see my face and live," was said to the whole world; and only *One* on earth has understood "all mysteries." To Him alone in fullest sense were "the

heavens opened ;” but He spake in parables, even to His apostles, because the hour of perfect knowledge was not yet come. There was a large meaning in His answer to Peter, that the apostle did not comprehend. “ Wither I go, thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.” We shall indeed drink of the cup of His knowledge, *but we must tarry* till He come. “ And when the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ,” the twilight of the world will be gone for ever, and “ we shall know as we are known.”

In the meanwhile, let us not be surprised and stunned at the gradual inpourings of light ; there is much in the Bible that has yet to come out. We have known in part, and prophecied in part ; but the time is at hand when a rich lower vein of its inspirations, will break open like the rock of Horeb, with gushings on the thirsty.

There is a path of equal clearness, and of thicker mystery at its back, *in our own construction*. The head is grey, and the footsteps trembling, and we know how it is. We know what has slowly wasted the accumulated strength of forty years, and how we appeared at life’s prime. We know how the strength of that prime broadened and grew, slowly turning infancy into childhood, and childhood into manhood. We have marked annually our birthday and its bringings, and some are alive who remember the first. There is no mystery how the child was born and became an old man.

The mystery of being is not in its *steps* and *form*. We all know the ordinary *development* of mind and matter. It is the *origination of its germ*, that throws human thought into the regions of mystery ; regions where all must move slowly and reverentially, and regions whose only echoes are *God*.

But it will not ever be so that the circumstances of its beginnings are trespassing ground for the mind. The mystery of its origin and incarnation will have left the mind in its glorified body ; and far away from shadows, it will reflect and worship.

There are evident traces in subterranean cavities of ancient existences that have long ceased to be seen on the earth. There are now nowhere, creatures corresponding to the Mammalia of "the Tertiary Period." There have been creatures we know little of ; and some of a vastly higher order than these.—Higher than our own. It is now hundreds of years since such as Gabriel, conversed with man in his own tongue of the wonderful works of God. Angels have been invisible, but not destroyed ; calculatively unapproachable, yet near. They have ministered unseen to the "heirs of salvation." They have influenced the world as much as ever, but latterly in a different way. The springs of waters are not now stirred by their powerful hands for the healing of the body ; but there *are other springs more valuable than Bethesda's*, proceeding out of the throne of God ; and day and night with its radiant incense, these

heralds cry at the door of the soul, holy, holy, holy. As the **ancient** cherubims, they *bend*, desiring to look into man's **resolves**, and to turn him from disaster. God has given them charge over him and preservation, lest he "dash his foot against a stone."

There is much the eye cannot see, and many influences felt, that are not traced. A world is near that doth not seem, when the heart is at full, and the pulse beats strong.

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, and the Lord is among them and the spirit and the bride also, say come."

There is in many leading minds of this generation, an influencing, that if allowed, would alter the long and general understanding of the miracles of Christianity. Extraordinary interpositions of God, *i.e.*, His special interference with His laws established at the foundation of the world, are argued not to have been. And the unusual signs which accompanied Christ and His apostles in the introduction of a better religion, are referred to their superior and high acquaintance with ordinary laws of nature and turned to good account; *i.e.*, used for the establishment of a new religious system, better and happier than the old, and as a powerful means, both of calling the world's attention to it, and of securing its permanence. This insight (it is said) into fore-ordained natural laws, was much elevated in its powers of accomplishment, by contemporary national

ignorance and superstition. The path of science was comparatively unexplored, and the temperament of exaggeration unsubdued by discoveries of the growth of Providence; and that such signs, uniting and following fresh doctrinal revelation, would, in the present day, be very differently received, and would remain with the understanding in a state, as it were of suspense, until the advance of scientific discovery explained their appearance from natural causes.

“If,” says Mr. Powell, “at the present day any very extraordinary and unaccountable fact were exhibited before the eyes of an unbiassed, educated, well-informed individual, and supposing all suspicion of imposture put out of the question, his only conclusion would be, that it was something he was unable at present to explain; and if at all versed in physical studies, he would not for an instant doubt either that it was really due to some natural cause, or that if properly rendered and examined, it would at some future time receive its explanation by the advance of discovery.”

In the humble pursuance of these startling explanations, it is only just to their expressers to state, that comparatively little doubt is thrown on the *truthfulness* of the sacred historians of the New Testament. There is a great acknowledgment of their excellent morality, and its continual carriage into the scenes represented. In plainer words, the four Evangelists are admitted to be men strong in the love of truth, and strong in common sense, and to have written exactly what their own eyes perceived, and as much

Of what they heard reported, as they believed accurately true.

There is much in this admission, to allow of procession to an examination of Mr. Powell's commentary upon it. Science is not now a *youth*; and has anything, or will anything be found in chemistry, that in combination would repeat "the first miracle of Cana in Galilee." Will ever the day come, when a clever chemist can turn water into wine; or a clever physician instantaneously cure paralysis, fever, issues of blood, lunacy, blindness, and insanity? Or, in the laws of galvanism and animal magnetism, has anything, or will anything be reached that can resuscitate the dead, "back to its mansion call the fleeting breath"; any prescription, that in its application to the tomb, "can soothe the dull cold ear of death." And if, for the purposes of examination, it were admitted, that in three or four more centuries, such fruits of science may be fairly looked for, there would still remain *in the fact of men* having a *foresight of two thousand years*, all the elements of a miracle. These seers must have had for this, which is inferentially allowed, a special inspiration of God, and a special inspiration of God is a miracle.

"The Pool by the Market Place," would be represented by modern essayists, in the same category as the wells of Harrogate or Croft; as a basin of current waters having

strong tonical powers, and remarkable for many and various cures. The "Angelic Visitation" would be construed as a figurative and popular expression of the healthful properties of the spring, roused into special action at certain seasons of the mountain floods.

The first part of such a definition is easier of reception than the last, but both are difficult. Admitting, as aforesaid, for the sake of investigation, that there were healing qualities in this bath that were aroused by friction, how and by what medical law and analogy were *they restricted* to the first user, efficacious only for one cure, and that only once a-year? There is not, perhaps, in all sacred history a leaf, more justifying of certain portions of the public protests lately made against Mr. Powell's essay, than this out of St. John's Gospel. The number of expectants in the porch are a strong proof of the repetition of the miracle, and its peculiar mode of application. It was well known by the fame of former years, and its conditions of restoration were also well known by experience and experiment.

Of the many who in many past years had plunged almost at the same time into the stream to meet the angel, only one, the first in, had been made "whole of whatsoever disease he had." In the absence of the angel, the water had been often used for ablutionary and other purposes, without any extraordinary benefits following. There was nothing to hinder the paralytic of thirty-eight years from these ordinary availments, and the fact of his long patience

and faith under its circumstances, is a very powerful testimony of the regularity, peculiarity, and reality of the miracle. His uniform evidences amounted to thirty-eight, and faith increased whilst hope diminished. The Pool was beyond doubt a sanctuary of God, and even his own disappointments had something refreshing in them. He was a philanthropist though a paralytic, and he had seen much suffering released.

The Saviour's eye was upon him, and he felt the completeness of His sympathy. The Lord's question had a signification of this sort, "You must be getting anxious, how is it that you have not been successful"?—And there was a manner with it, that only The Son of God had. The poor man's hope mysteriously revived; he replied with emphasis and pathos to the question, and with faithful obedience to the command, "and immediately he was made whole, and took up his bed and walked."

THE SEASONS.

THE seasons in their rotation bring spiritual applications; the voices of nature are innumerable, and draw out as it were in mighty chorus, the inspirations of the Bible; their echoes seem to underline each page, and to swell it to distincter view.

We are surrounded by admonitions. The bee-hive under the sun has not more enriching visitations than the mind of man. There comes to it with many tides, lessons of time and eternity.

The pearl-seeker looks eagerly at the front wave, for it may have much to give; some gem of "unfathomed caves" may be in its arms: it is a steward of the treasures of the deep, and his fortune may be near. The soul has greater interests than these. Her objects are grander, and they are everlasting. The pearls of the goldsmith will change hands at his death, *but the soul will keep her's*. She will carry over "Jordan" the wealth of knowledge, and will feast on it for ever. She ought to watch well. Her gaze should be eagerly accurate, and comprehensive. There is much for her to get, and little time to gather, and we are soon out of sight. A tear falls and a thought ascends, but neither can bring us back. "The night cometh when no man can work; and let the dead bury their dead." Why should we pine at the foot of the grave? that is neither

the place or the means of reunion. Would we see again our departed friend, we must overtake his spirit, and it is not at the grave. Let the willow weep, we must leave the tomb; there are but few herbs by it, and it is a bad threshing floor. Yet He who said, "Let the dead bury their dead," went far to visit His friend's grave, and His eye was moist when He reached it. "Jesus wept." Here is ample apology for the mourner, though it seems to contradict old words. Here is a saying, that seems to meet and break affection's clouds. He was a "Man of Sorrows" who earned it, and a Man of Love who bore them. There was wanting in the Saviour's heart neither size nor tenderness, and He had often to weep. His tears fell on cities as well as graves. "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" what weight thine iniquities and the sum of them, how they rise as a "Tower of Babel" by the side of the tears of the Son of God.

It was the *excess* of social care, the preference of *social* duties over *religious*, the *postponements* of salvation, that our Lord rebuked. The man might go and bury his father, but he must not forget *he had another*. He might sing a funeral dirge, but he must not forget "The Lord's Prayer." We may love father and mother, but *not more than God*; and believe me, though it is an old saying, this dangerous partiality seems from many histories to bring bereavement. There is a *deep*, though not a *human meaning*, in "The Second Commandment," The Lord thy God,

oh Israel, is a jealous God. Yet the mean weak passion that we call "jealousy" has no kindredship with God, nor can we by our experiences of it obtain much interpretation of Him. The sentence of Sinai is *a condescending one*. It gives us an *understanding*, but no *comparison*. It shows us the *obligations* of Divine relationship, but not a *Divine attribute*. We are taught by it *whom to love best*, and it is enough.

There is often to be seen in the world expressions of God and theology, evidently the produce of almost blasphemous self-contrasts. His glory is defiled by the comparisons of human action, and discreditable human feeling are woven into the depiction of His providence. We can read other men by what we know of ourselves. We can follow the path of a fellow's thoughts by self-similitude. We can dive into other men's dispositions by searching the ground of our own; but fleshly emotions and their train give out no light of God, and are no mirror of the face of The Most High. We are the nearest Him in our conceptions, when the heart is still, and our inspirations of Him are the purest and highest in solitude.

Like the first legislator on the cleft of the rock, the goodness of God passes as above the multitude, and it is in our dreams that Heaven is opened.

I have said, that the seasons have a teaching not to be refused, and that it draws out from the Bible a response

and confirmation, and is the helper even of its interpretations. The sower opening his hands over the furrows, is a good example of practical faith and of the attitude of the trustful Christian. There are many clouds between him and the "Harvest Home;" there may be too little dew and over-much sun; there may be too much rain and not enough of sun. It will be long before the ear is seen, and the full corn in the ear; and it may not all spring, or if it all spring, it may not all ripen; and if it all ripen, it may not all be gathered; yet he sows cheerfully, hopefully, and resignedly.

There are many clouds between the Christian and Heaven, and at present he sees but its outline: he has many steepes to climb, and many discouragements to resist, and many thorns in his feet, ere its *real shape and dispositions* are even imagined; and many are his surprises as he gradually decipheres them. The city is not like what he first supposed: it has a different aspect *near* to what it had afar off: yet it is not *another Heaven*. No change has acted upon the *object*, but a great one on the *viewer*. His mental eye has never lost its *mark*, but it has *changed its colour*; it has been ever externally fixed, though ever internally varied, and at last A New Heaven clear and glorious is at hand. Is the scene less bright, thrilling, and remunerative, because it is strange? The visions of spiritual old age are not afflicted by the remembrance of their precedents. We look back on the imaginings of childhood with kindly sympathy; and with-

out the shadow of contempt welcome their recollection: they have a *sort of resemblance* to the full-grown mind as the face of the boy to the man, and we are not ashamed, nay, we are proud to identify them. The child's idea of heaven and the stars are not disagreeable. He says he could make his kite touch the celestial vaults, and that the stars are loop-holes for the glory above, and it is but a simple form of true thought. He wants to express his instincts of the nearness and brightness of God and Heaven, and he makes the clouds and the stars his medium; and perhaps after all, there is not such incoincidence of expression; for "God is not far from every one of us," and one of the old Prophets, child-like, prays Him "to rend the sky and come down," and a modern poet, looking upward, exclaims,

"Ye shining stars are but the dust of My divine abode,
The pavement of those heavenly courts, where I shall
reign with God."

And through the eye of the telescope are visible the borders of luminous regions, which having no alternations of day and night, correspond with St. John's discoveries of the New Jerusalem. *But the great point is, not where Heaven is, or what its adaptations will be, but the fixture of the mind upon it, i.e., the having an undeviating faith that God's wisdom and goodness has prepared a next world as suitable for future life, as this world is for present life, and that accordingly as we conduct life here, we shall begin it hereafter, and that the Sacred Scriptures are by God's pro-*

vidence and inspiration, the safe teachers of a present conduct, that will insure to the soul the happiest successions; a conduct that in all its comprehensions of Divine helps and self effort, make the safety and bliss of the soul certain.

The growth of the corn has like the sowing of it, spiritual representations and lessons. It rises gradually, and the dew of the firmament helps it up. The Christian's preparations for heaven are "*gradual*." He shines more and more unto the perfect day, and the Spirit of God is with him in the night; the night of temptation, the night of affliction, and the night of death.

The reaping of the corn has also spiritual representations of the delivery up to God of the fruits of this life, and the removal of our dwelling place.

THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES.

WE approach the Epistle of St. James with feelings of peculiar affection and interest. He was a near relation of Our Lord, and remarkable for the holiness of his life. We may naturally suppose he had much private association with Him before His public ministry. Jesus had probably then often spoken of His extraordinary birth and mission, and given James an anticipation of its glories.

He was with the Lord on Mount Tabor when Moses and Elias "talked with Him," and he heard His prayer of Gethsemane, "Oh, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass."

The Epistle of St. James shows through its inspiration, his quick perception of human character, and a strong moral courage. He saw through the deceits of men, and the corruptions of society, and he had the boldness to expose them. He was a *practical* man, and thoroughly kind-hearted. He has given the mere verbalist a merited chastisement, and provided the most salutary consolations for the sick. He has vindicated Divine Providence from its blasphemers, and justly rebuked the calculations of the profane. There were some modern faults in his eye when he addressed the rich landholder, and the fashionist. Through the growth of avarice there is now little hope for the poor gleaner. Like the sons of Eli, the husbandmen draw their rake through what should be left a sacrifice, and men of heart like Boaz are rare. There is also in some present congregational arrangements a likeness in spirit to the scene of the man with "gold rings and goodly apparel." The formation of "free sittings" in differing and less comfortable shape seems an analogy of it, and the arrangement* of the poor at the Commemoration Table, a reproof of Christ's partiality for them.

* I have noticed the poor receive the bread and wine towards *the end* of its administration.

The sincerity, self-knowledge, and honesty of St. James are manifest in this inspired letter. What are fine words (he asks) to a hungry and ill clad brother. What doth it profit to stand facetiously at the door? Thy starving sister demands proof of thy love to Christ. Believe ye His saying of the judgment question (25 Matt.)?

It was not St. James's intention to underrate the value of kind words: they have a large power to soothe and cheer, and in many cases are the only possible answer to the appeal of distress. It is not every one who has much else to spare. It is with the wealthy and competent his reproof tarries.

Christianity has (so to speak) been much leavened and kneaded by the depravities of the heart. The strong and various appeals of Christ to faith and humility of reliance in the divinity and developments of His mission, have been wrested in justification of an idle dependency, and been made impediments to the growth of His kingdom. They have been made to teach self-effort for hereafter as needless, as useless, nay, even as the indirect expression of doubt in the all-sufficiency of Jesus. To this misapprehension is attributable the common phrase of certain assemblies, "Good works" are compared to "filthy rags," and inferences drawn, that religion mainly consists in psalmody and sermons. It is easy to account for the swift spreading and growth of such misinterpretation. It runs

to meet fallen nature. It is an offer of relief to the self-denials of exertion and watchfulness. It produces "holiday feelings" in the heart, and is a kind of passport to the extension of conviviality. The writings of this Epistle are, we fear, practically shunned by many professors of Christ. They are too real. St. James has no pleasure in mere "ideas;" shew me, says he, to the paralytic in soul, thy faith by thy works. There is perhaps in this severity of Christian appreciation an explanation of his long rejection by the canonists. He did not "sufficiently reflect the changing atmosphere of the world and the Church."

There is too much attribution of evil to an *outside* power. The process of wicked deeds is traced back to the sowings of a rebellious archangel. To the Devil is ascribed effects little short of Omnipotence and Omnipresence. Preachers often give him a personification that confirms the vulgar prints. They confuse the figures of the Bible, and are ever fixing the mental eye *beyond* instead of *within*. They seem not to comprehend that there is "an old serpent" coiled and hissing *in* the flesh, and at the soul. In their investigation of the origin of evil, and its ever present temptations, they enter not so much into the liable privileges of "free will," as into the Miltonic atmosphere of "war in heaven." They prefer in prescription "the beating of the air" to the subjection of the vile body.

They oftener exhort to a wrestling with the *hoverer* than the *croucher*; with the adjacent than the indwelling; with

Beelzebub than flesh and blood. Not so, St. James, He does not speak of Satan with attributes of power—he himself—if a common version be true, for wishing to have, lost Heaven. He intimates that the spiritual principle of “free will” has been abused, and that temptation is mostly a question between the flesh and the Spirit. “Every man (says he) is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.” He had examined and he *knew himself*, and that the root of evil was in the same soil everywhere. He had detected in his constitution a law in opposition to conscience, “A law in his members warring against the law of his mind;” and he gave it its right name.

In the history of angels there is evidently a concurrentness with the early history of man. In both races there has been a great moral deflection of great physical, and to one at least, *hereditary* consequence. In “the angelic,” there has been a prince of evil as in “the human.” Both have had their notable first transgressor. The Devil and Adam, though in other points of view having very different regards, are alike in one. They both present the notion of “Revolutionary Leaders.” Of their respective treason we have little in detail. Under the term “forbidden fruit” there are two volumes yet unpublished, and they have probably a similarity of burden. But if their burden be unsung, it is *influential*; the force of its leaves is yet upon man, and he protests and prays both against

“the law in his members,” and the “wiles of the Devil.” He has *two* foes, but the first is the worst. “Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.”

The pupil of St. James should be often with him in his third chapter. He is a true watchman at the “door of the lips.” He has given “the tongue” some hard names and capabilities. It is a powerful instrument for evil, if badly worked; it can be made the conductor of a malice that burns as fire; it can sow the seed “of a world of iniquity.” Through the tongue, thoughts and feelings come out in a form provocative of the greatest crimes: a few vile words have been known to dig a grave and erect a scaffold; yet the tongue is harmless, if the heart is right; if its streams are holy; the tongue will deliver them so, and it is to the *source* we must look. “Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your *hearts*, ye double-minded.”

Self-ignorance is the tongue’s worst master. The feelings for want of proper analysis are often misrepresented; their strength is over-rated and their character misunderstood; the change of circumstances, and its alterations of the heart, is not calculated in the haste of expression, and a curse often follows a blessing. The tongue of to-day reverses the edicts of yesterday: a wind hath arisen; the face of the heart is changed, and it “sends forth at the same place sweet water and bitter.”

It is easy to distinguish between thought and feeling,

though the distinction is not always made. There is, however, a near relationship. The one may be called the parent of the other; feeling evokes thought; the heart *stimulates* the soul; the feelings seem to give the thoughts complexion, and to force them at *least into commentary*, if not utterance. The danger lies in their power to force themselves *before* commentary; and it is a danger not always avoided. The wisdom of inward scrutiny is not always the forerunner of speech.—The wave of the heart, unbroken by thought, dashes against its adversary. Yet the control of the heart is not so much in conversation a *simultaneous* act; the pleasant freedom of social intercourse would be marred by *immediate* inspections of thought; the tongue would be for ever trembling between opposed currents; and a growing mistrust shadow the fire-side. It is the preparatory act of the lonely hour, the hour of meditation, the hour of prayer, that is the liberation and safeguard of human fellowship. We go from the cloister armed and free. Its pious exercises have laid at the root of the heart such corrections and influences, that "bitter envying and strife" will not grow. We have acquired a sweet and serene faith in ourselves. The godly love inspired, gives out prospective light to the mind, and creates a grateful confidence that our movements will be right. The tongue is safe in such hands. But there are minds that like "De Foe's Exile," shrink from their own footsteps; that never *return* on their way, or knock im-

peratively at the doors of memory; that sink no line of fathom in the heart, and are driven by its tides, reckless of the rocks ahead. In its revelations of these, the tongue is the instrument of lying, and every kind of fraud; of truce-breaking, and blasphemy against God. "It setteth on fire the course of nature;" it is like a burning brand in society; it weakens the faith of brotherly love; it takes the name of God in vain; "and it is set on fire of hell." The evil spirit at last apprehended, leaves its weapon of assassination in the grave, and is taken to its own place.

And there are other minds, in some degree cautious and self-examining. Persons selfishly careful not themselves to become the prey of mischief, yet delighting in its external operations; like evil birds on carrion, feeding upon the strife of friends and families, secretly yet wilfully sowing divisions and rejoicing in their views; setting the battle in array but not intermingling; passing between as angels of peace, yet stealthily increasing the discord. In such hands the tongue is as the fork of a serpent, puncturing, swelling, and inflaming; "it has an unruly evil full of deadly poison."

The importance of self-knowledge in the government of the tongue is truly great, for the picture of the wilful mischief worker *differs only in the back-ground*, from that of the *thoughtless one*. There is no comparison *in their*

motives, but a very close one in their *results*. The social disorders of the former are but in slight degree distinguishable from those of the latter. The breath of idle gossip has rent the strongest ties; the inventions of the tattler have quenched the charm of friendship, and stolen from love its vital warmth. The exclusion of ill design in such issues makes them not less mournful, and acquits not their promoter. Apologetic retracings are not an instant cure for bleeding hearts, and innocence of intention is not always freedom from reproach. The relief of mental inactivity cannot be drawn without stain, from the faith of brotherhoods. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth."

The distinction between thought and feeling is not, I have said, always made. Feeling is given the name of thought, and opinions which are the offspring of transient feeling are supposed to be the fruit of careful thought. We say *we think*, when *we do but feel*. That which has come direct from the heart, is said to have come through the mind; that which is supposed to have been sifted has only been scattered. Conception is called birth, and influences unprofitable "for doctrine and correction of righteousness," are lightly and wantonly spread. Opinion, especially on religious matters, should not be the off-shoot of spasmodic effect. "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

Self-ignorance has yet another consequence. Its confusions load the tongue with yet additional falsehood. Feeling has many names, and, in its various communications or passage to another, is grievously miscalled. It is not only given the name of thought, but given one of *its own names at the wrong time*. How often is temporarily subdued hatred called love; how often hidden and patient malice called forgiveness. We say we love, when love's *opposite passion has merely abated*; we say we forgive, *without any true warrant of heart*. We are unknowingly "deceitful in the weights." The quicksilver of the thermometer is true to the atmosphere, *but not* the tongue to the heart.

FURTHER EXPLANATIONS OF THE FALL.

THERE are many sorrows in the world, and some that there is little or no medicine for. The days are few that bring not either from the world, our neighbourhood, or family circle, tidings painful and sad. It has always been so from the beginning of history, sacred and secular; and the explanation of it is difficult, deep, and complex. The mind must be far-reaching, clear, and constructive, to fully comprehend the effect of the fall on the providence

of God. In the foreordinances of the Divine Creator, there were no germs of this suffering now everywhere intermixed with joy. It is not the fruit of the will of God; it is the fruit of the will of man.

The Tree of Life in the midst of The Garden is a beautiful representation of the mind of God in the heart of the world; unmeddled with, "man might freely have eaten of every tree in Eden; they were not only pleasant to the sight, but good for food," *i.e.*, he might have, without interruption, enjoyed all God's preparations for his existence and its bliss, and would *now* have been in their unalloyed enjoyment, had his free will been content not to interfere with God's. We know from the inspiration of Moses, that which before we come to Genesis, we are inclined to suspect, that in some way impossible to particularise, man has interfered with the mechanism and perfect course of creation; and there are consequences this very day, that could be traced back and back through minutest links, to the first coilings of the serpent, the first lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, the peculiar sorrows of women, and the sweat on man's brow.

This is the meaning of God's visiting the sins of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation; it is not that He singles out for direct judgment the grandchild of an iniquitous man; it is that the grandchild by the certain and accurate sequence of interrupted foreordained laws (*i.e.*, laws first established by God turned from their

operations by disobedience or neglect) is the subject of pain and grief through a forefather's sins. A fearful responsibility, not sufficiently realized, attends the actions of men. What we do, returns with happiness or misery not only to ourselves, but to generations unborn. To the tide of existence we are by all our mental and bodily conduct, contributing sweets or bitters. It has pleased God to make us to a great extent in this world our own arbiters, and so minute, inclusive, and certain, are His laws in their consequence, that even mental and moral, as well as physical qualities are communicative, and the sins of the spirit as well as the body, long after first habitation, in the fourth or fifth succession, in greater or less distinctness, steal out with retrogressive index, on the faithless forehead, in the shadows of a disordered brain, or the faintnesses or ulcerations of an unwholesome flesh.

The Second Commandment of Sinai, in connexion with "the fall," we see to be the accountant of much of the suffering of mankind. It is both an interpreter and an admonitor. It throws additional light on the origin of evil, guards against the thickening of its streams, and inferentially prescribes a mode of diminution. Sin and sorrow have ever been closely connected. We inherit more than a name or an estate from our parents. The secret of their conduct is wrapt up in the constitution of their babes, and time will bring it into conflict, and into remedy or increase.

It is clear that all men have not equally strong temptations. Some start life better in mind and body than others ; but God has made a special provision against the doctrine of fatalism, by the outpouring of His omnipotent Spirit, upon all who ask help for the soul, in its more or less unequal wrestling. This grace of God is given the sincere seeker, in proportion to the strength of his soul's adversary, the flesh ; and souls go through this life, and out of it, into greater degradation, not from weakness and too great inequality of contest with evil, but from want of steady, earnest, frequent, persevering prayer to Him who "maketh strength perfect through weakness, and his sun to rise on the evil and on the good."

In the administration of judgment to come, God will make a great distinction between the addings to the plague of original sin, *through wilful lust, and through ignorance*. The Son of God affirmed this : "The servant who knew his Lord's will, and did it not, is to be beaten with many stripes ; the servant who knew it not, with few."

There are many in the world who add corruption to their bodies and minds, and thereby to the bodies and minds of their offspring, through ignorance, and through associations unbroken by the light of sanitary and hallowing counsels. The poor have not sufficiently learnt, and are not sufficiently taught, the immense importance of cleanliness, ventilation, the purities of domestic arrangement, the dangers of all excess, and the quality of their

food. Their extremity should be the more enlightened Christian's opportunity. A missionary field is close at hand, and the teacher of morality is doing Christ's work as creditably and needfully as the preacher of religion. He is in proceeding, a sort of Elias, preparing the way for higher conceptions, laying foundations for higher communion, and thinning the crust of darkness and defilement between immortal souls and the noon-light of heaven. There are, however, none so ignorant to be blind to the comprehensive results of drunkenness and impurity; and much of the misery of the lower classes proceeds from these vile engagements.

In the awful physical and mental pangs that make it up, they cry out curses and blasphemies against God, as though He were the author of their woes, and speak as if the fires of their *own* kindling were the hell of *His* sending; and there is often a more refined and distant reference of these issues, by attendants who ought to know God and themselves better, to the mysteries of Divine providence, and out of these supposed mysteries, a blasphemous resignation urged; blasphemous, because it implies that the sufferer is undergoing, by the *direct* order of God, more than he seemingly deserves.

But the contributions of suffering to the world are not all made and received and propagated by the low in rank and habit. With superior cultivation, with refined associations, with results more distinctly before their eyes,

men steep themselves in the same infamous vices, and prematurely waste and die, cursing and blaspheming God. And whilst, on the one hand, the uneducated poor derive much mental and bodily anguish from the neglect through apathy or ignorance of healthy social regulations; on the other hand, the educated rich, derive as much, from luxury, in all forms and irregularities at all times.

It is, then, through the heritage of ancestors, and the general ill conduct of human life, that the cause of so much suffering is traced, that the "passing bell" so often tolls, that the grave is so often open, that the mourning crape is so often worn, and that so many sighs of weariness, and groans of anguish and remorse, break on the world.

It is remarkable that our Lord in all His participations of human nature's wants and liabilities, never experienced bodily disorder. He was hungry, thirsty, cold, and homeless; He was bereaved, betrayed, forsaken, *but never sick*; He was in all things like unto His brethren but this. He was without sin, and therefore without sickness; the miraculousness of His birth saved Him from the taint of original sin, and therefore from bodily disease. And in this exceptional feature of His earthly life, is to be seen the strongest confirmations of hereditary evil, and further explanations of the development of that evil in strength, in disease, in mourning, and in death.

But there are other sorrows in the world quite distinct in *origin* from any yet mentioned, though resembling some

of them in appearance; such sorrows as came to Joseph, to Moses, to Job, to Daniel, to Shadrach, Mesheck, and Abednego, to Jeremiah, to John the Baptist, to Stephen, and the only begotten Son of God. Sorrows by the special mission of God, for the formation of a peculiar people, for an example to the multitude, for the testing and illustration of faith, and the rebuke of infidelity; for the sanctification of the soul, for the settlement of new revelations, and for the sealing efficacy of their application. These sorrows were an honour in their pangs and endurance, for they were sacrifices to the cause of God. The patients "saw of the travail of their soul, and were satisfied." And the all-wise government of God is not even now without such instrumentalities. It is to persons thus called upon, and to such alone, to suffer, that the exhortation "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," belongs, and the pious ascriptive sentences, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good," and, "Thy will be done," are appropriate and relative in use.

